



# Inspiring Transformation...

LESSONS FROM THE CGIAR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SERIES

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**GELAYE DEBEBE, PH.D.**

*The George Washington University*

AND

**THE CENTER FOR GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS**

*Simmons Graduate School of Management*

47

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# Preface

*I can't overemphasize how much these courses have taught me. I came out each time just going, "Wow!" It's been a real learning process, always challenging.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

The CGIAR Women's Leadership Series (WLS) has been getting rave reviews since it began in 1995. File folders in the office of the Gender & Diversity Program (G&D) are filled with exuberant messages and letters and even an occasional gift card, thanking us for providing these excellent courses and giving our women the chance to find out more about who they are, where they can go and how they can get there.

More than 300 CGIAR women have had the opportunity to improve their leadership and negotiations skills with the CGIAR Women's Leadership and Management Course and the CGIAR Negotiation Skills for Women Course.<sup>1</sup> The Negotiation Course, introduced in 2001, is a follow-up to the Leadership Course. Due to growing demand, both from within the CGIAR and from the outside, we have held increasing numbers of courses over the years.

We recognize that the management of collaborations and partnerships is essential to good leadership in today's CGIAR and thus have opened the courses to women working with our key partners including national agricultural research systems (NARs), the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Bank and the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). We also have adjusted our curricula and materials to put stronger emphasis on teamwork and the influence of diversity and cross-cultural dynamics.



Another unique aspect of the WLS is that it is offered to all women in the CGIAR, not just its top managers. As emphasized in this paper, we separate “leadership” from “authority” and invite all women whose work would benefit from an increased ability to inspire and lead others. As a result, our courses are in themselves exercises in diversity, inclusive of women from all regions and from all job categories, both in research and administration. They learn from one another as well as from our trainers, leading to invaluable friendships and networks.

G&D's WLS courses are run on a strictly at-cost basis. This makes it feasible for G&D to offer them continuously, rotating around the world's regions. Centers pay course tuition, travel, room and board for each woman they send. When hosting one of our Leadership Courses, the Centers go well beyond what is necessary to make the women feel welcome by providing tours of their science programs, cultural shows, and formal and informal social opportunities with Center leadership and staff.

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of brevity, the two courses will be referred to as the “Leadership Course” and the “Negotiation Course” in this paper. The CGIAR Advanced Leadership Course, launched in 2005, is not included in this study.

**Word has spread ...**

G&D continuously receives requests from women in all regions of the globe, asking if they, too, may attend. In 2006, for example, we set up three Leadership Courses in addition to one Negotiation Course and one Advanced Leadership Course – and still we could not meet the demand. Many women applicants had to be turned down.

*What is it women are getting from the CGIAR WLS they are not getting elsewhere?*

In recognition of our 10-year milestone, we decided to find out by adding in-depth research to our course evaluations and files of anecdotal feedback. G&D commissioned this research to tell us more about the long-term impact of the WLS – impact on the women who take the course and, in turn, how they affect the organizational culture of their Centers.

This report is the result of a six-month study by Dr. Gelaye Debebe, assistant professor of organizational sciences at The George Washington University and Faculty Affiliate at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons Graduate School of Management. She worked with total autonomy. G&D provided her the names and contacts of our alumnae and then we stepped back.

**Now, as you read this study, please keep these thoughts in mind ...**

The CGIAR has made progress in recent years, improving the gender balance of our Centers. However, we certainly have not achieved what we think is possible and needed if we are to attract and retain the world's top women scientists. The WLS is but one strategy among several for bringing the benefits of women's experience to the CGIAR's compelling work.

This also is an opportunity for us to thank the women who agreed to participate in this study. More than a quarter of the alumnae responded to the survey and 24 participated in in-depth interviews with the researcher – an impressive number considering some of them were participants a full decade ago. They are quoted quite extensively in the report. Some editing has been done to protect their confidentiality but absolute care has been taken to ensure that no nuances of meaning have been changed.

Our alumnae's voices are interspersed throughout the main text of this study and more complete interviews are presented in what the author calls "Leadership Stories". These first-hand stories personify the challenges CGIAR women face within their Centers, ranging from outright discrimination to subtle territorial games. You'll also learn about the ideas and tools they have found most useful for overcoming such challenges.

As you read, you will also see that this research has come up with a breakthrough framework for defining different types of women leaders and for describing the kinds of transformations they have had as a result of the WLS courses. This new framework has far reaching implications for the way we view women's leadership potential – from scientific laboratories to corporate headquarters worldwide. I sincerely believe this study and its breakthrough framework will serve not only the CGIAR but all organizations interested in advancing women.

**VICKI WILDE, LEADER**  
*CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program*

# Acknowledgements

This study was commissioned by the Gender & Diversity (G&D) Program of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). It was made possible by the CGIAR women who agreed to be interviewed. Without their stories, we would not have learned as much as we have about the impact of the CGIAR Women's Leadership Series. I thank these women for giving generously of their time and for openly sharing their challenges and strategies with me. I hope they will feel satisfied with the representation of their experiences in this report.

I also would like to express my gratitude to G&D Leader Vicki Wilde for initiating this study as well as for her openness and genuine curiosity in discovering what this research would reveal. Her willingness to provide information that I needed while giving me complete autonomy in the implementation of the research enabled me to represent the stories and experiences of WLS alumnae without constraints. Thanks to Pauline Bomett, also from G&D, for providing all necessary logistical support.

I also wish to express my gratitude to Patricia Deyton, Director of the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO) at the Simmons Graduate School of Management, for asking me to undertake this research and for providing me with support and autonomy to do the work. Many thanks to Susan Sampson from Simmons Graduate School of Management for managing the Web survey and providing descriptive results from the survey that have been incorporated in this paper. Ashley Barrington at CGO was instrumental in diligently transcribing all the interviews. Finally, Tara Hudson at CGO provided support whenever her assistance was needed.

In addition, I would like to thank several individuals who read through a draft of this manuscript and provided constructive and helpful feedback. They are: Fabiola Amariles, Patricia Deyton, Joyce Fletcher, Gayathri Jayasinghe, Deborah Kolb, Robert Moore, Kenneth Reinert, Amelia Goh and Vicki Wilde.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Nancy Hart for her patience, good humor and excellent editorial work on the manuscript.

**GELAYE DEBEBE**

*Author, Principle Investigator*

# Executive summary

*The training course gave me understanding that some of my instinctive ways of doing things were right or had value, that I didn't need to absorb every aspect of the organization's culture, that there was value in the way I was. So in one sense, the course kept me from losing myself totally to the behaviors and working culture I was observing.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

The CGIAR Women's Leadership Series (WLS) was launched in 1995. It was designed to develop the leadership skills of women scientists and managers within the CGIAR Centers worldwide. This report describes and analyzes findings of a research project assessing the impact of the WLS during the past 10 years.

The CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program (G&D) commissioned the research, provided the researcher with the necessary contacts and reviewed the study strategy. However, to ensure researcher independence, G&D was not involved in the collection, handling or analysis of information obtained for this study. Information was collected by the principal investigator, Dr. Gelaye Debebe, by means of a Web-based survey and in-depth telephone interviews.

Approximately one quarter of all WLS alumnae, 76 women, responded to the Web survey. Of the 50 who agreed to be interviewed, 24 followed through and were interviewed. Thus, approximately 8 percent of WLS alumnae were interviewed regarding their leadership experiences prior to and after the WLS as well as their key insights from the WLS courses.

A key assumption made in this research is that, while "leadership" and "authority" can be related, they are not synonymous. Despite the failure to distinguish these terms in everyday language and in the leadership literature itself, several researchers have convincingly argued that leadership and authority are *distinct* notions. While an individual with formal authority in a given area can be said to be a leader, what defines her as such is not the authority vested in her position. Rather, it is her ability to inspire and guide others in order to bring about change or to address a complex problem. Taking this view, anyone, irrespective of station in a social system, has the potential to become a leader.

A second assumption relates to the idea of development – the need for ongoing development of leaders and leadership skills. Training itself cannot lead to significant behavioral change; there must be follow-up practice in real-world settings. Thus, an assumption of this research is that the WLS will have had a positive impact if alumnae are able to re-enter their organizations, build on what they learned in their training and work more effectively. A less desirable scenario would be one in which the WLS

alumnae fail to utilize what they learned or the effect of the training simply “wears off” over time.

The research findings indicate that the two WLS courses – leadership and negotiation – put in motion a process that resulted in three types of leadership transformation. Those who came to the course as “hidden leaders” were transformed into “visible leaders”. Those who came to the course as “constrained leaders” were transformed into “enabled leaders”. Finally, those who came to the course as “intuitive leaders” were transformed into “strategic leaders”. Each of these leadership transformations came about from a “breakthrough” during the course that led to sustained post-course behavioral change and resulted in the participants overcoming earlier leadership dilemmas.

### Transforming hidden leaders into visible leaders

Hidden leaders are those individuals whose leadership capacity is limited by the suppression of their ideas, insights, knowledge and skills. Prior to the WLS, hidden leaders engaged in self-limiting patterns of thinking and in actions that prevented them from expressing their knowledge and abilities effectively. A key feature of their thought pattern was their belief that they lacked agency – the ability to effect positive change on their environment. They attributed positive outcomes to others’ efforts, failing to see how they might also have contributed. Doubts about their abilities to effect change led them to withhold ideas and perspectives and avoid taking risks. These beliefs also rendered them ineffective in resisting practices, such as more dominating or assertive

behavior on the part of other people that drowned their potential contributions.

*For years, I’ve felt that there was a huge value in diversity, but in that course they did some team exercises that revealed evidence of the added value of incorporating diversity. That reinforced my existing feelings and also gave me some concrete evidence that I could present to other people when I was arguing for our very inclusive approach.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

Two significant breakthroughs in self-awareness occurred for hidden leaders during the WLS course. They recognized that despite their efforts to “hide”, others noticed them. At best, hiding behavior was interpreted in neutral terms but, as some

discovered, it was also interpreted negatively. More importantly, hidden leaders recognized, often for the first time, that those perspectives they kept hidden actually were appreciated by others and were beneficial for the organization. Others’ appreciation of them led hidden leaders to recognize that they had something valuable to offer. This change in perspective paved the way for their post-WLS behavioral change.

Without exception, all hidden leaders left the workshop feeling empowered and eager to express themselves more fully upon return to their organizations. In post-WLS interviews, they described how they caught themselves when they engaged in self-limiting thinking. By changing how they thought, hidden leaders also changed their actions:

- those who had self-censored their thoughts began to speak up,
- those who had felt unable to establish a presence and be heard in groups learned to speak confidently and authoritatively, and



- those who did work that was not recognized learned to make their work and contributions visible to key decision-makers.

These new practices enabled hidden leaders to move out of the shadows and take on more visible leadership roles. Consequently, the hidden leaders' teams benefited from the additional contribution of knowledge and skill.

### Transforming constrained leaders into enabled leaders

Constrained leaders are those who exhibit leadership effectiveness in some areas but not in others due to their lack of relevant knowledge and skill. Leadership challenges of constrained leaders usually relate to managing relationships. For instance, constrained leaders deal with difficulties of isolation (self-isolation as well as discounting and exclusion by others), of effectively resisting subtle coercive interpersonal pressures during negotiations, of lack of success in motivating and building effective teams, and of managing negative emotions.

During the WLS, the turning point for most constrained leaders came when they were presented with theories and conceptual frameworks that helped them understand their experiences and see them in different ways. Conceptual input gave many constrained leaders a framework to:

- understand their challenges,
- recognize leverage points, and
- envision strategic responses and action steps.

Among the changes described in their post-WLS interviews was increased ability to build highly motivated teams, manage anger, engage others in constructive conversation to resolve organizational problems and negotiate effectively to ensure that organizational resources were utilized appropriately.

### Transforming intuitive leaders into strategic leaders

Intuitive leaders exercise leadership in a wide variety of situations but do so without understanding why they are effective. Intuitive leaders who participated in the WLS felt they already were effective negotiators, team builders and change agents but their post-WLS interviews reflected subtle shifts. The knowledge and skill development exercises of the WLS allowed them to become more strategic and systematic about what they had previously done intuitively. Some strategic leaders drew on ideas from the course to make adjustments in their interactions in order to reach more collaborative and desirable outcomes. Others felt the WLS course affirmed and enabled them to maintain their personal values and commitments, such as valuing diversity and collaboration, even when this was sometimes discouraged in their organizations. Finally, the conceptual information from the WLS course(s) enabled some strategic leaders to articulate and act upon these commitments in the context of their work.

### Post-WLS implications

The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that this series of Leadership and Negotiation Courses has had a positive impact on the development of women's leadership within the CGIAR. The knowledge, skills, self-awareness and perspective changes



that resulted from the WLS courses for all three categories of leaders has improved their ability to handle everyday leadership challenges they face at work.

However, despite the overwhelmingly positive assessments of their experiences, several interviewees felt that fully unleashing women's leadership capacity will require addressing the structural problems that underlie many of the everyday barriers they encounter such as pervasive negative and discriminatory assumptions and practices in their Centers, based on gender and recruitment category (national staff versus international staff). Without addressing these barriers organizationally, the changes in individual behavior fostered by the WLS most likely will be constrained from having full impact.

### Theoretical contributions and new questions

This study makes two contributions to the leadership development literature. First, it shows that women learners are diverse with respect to their developmental needs. Therefore, it is important to have a differentiated view of women leaders who need to travel different paths to leadership development. The study articulates three different types of leaders and the different paths to their leadership transformation. Second, the study provides empirical evidence that shows a distinction between leadership and authority. The three leadership types were composed of individuals at all hierarchical levels and within all recruitment categories. This suggests that it is more important to understand the leadership experiences of women to determine developmental needs than to use rank as a proxy.

While the study provided some general insights into women's leadership development, it also raises at least one key question that should be the subject of future research: Which

organizational practices and processes would support the continued leadership growth of WLS alumnae?

*I think I have gained the space to express myself more fully, I have gained in terms of leadership, I have gained respect, and I have gone up in the organization. But there are still gender stereotypes, attitudes and behaviors that limit my leadership effectiveness as a woman.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

The current case shows that enabling women to create conditions that make it possible for them to exercise leadership more effectively is critical. Vis-

ible, constrained and intuitive leaders all acted in ways that enabled them to remove obstacles to leadership effectiveness through their own efforts. In doing so, they built effective teams, introduced innovative practices and methods, advocated for equitable policies, built collaborative relationships, built support for system-wide initiatives and much more. This suggests that the WLS course is doing more than just strengthening the leadership capacity of individual women. It raises the intriguing possibility that women themselves are taking initiatives and starting to change their workplaces into more women-friendly organizations.

# Introduction



*Before I did this training, my tendency was to argue until people capitulated. But training made me recognize that if I win out of sheer force of will, it's not going to be a happy alliance because other people will feel like they've given in or lost. It's much, much better to come to a common agreement where everybody feels they've won something – maybe not 100 percent of what they wanted, but everybody feels that they've gotten something out of the deal. And that's been quite significant.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

Many organizations support training to help turn their senior managers and executives into better leaders. As the number of women in all job categories has increased, there has been a corresponding interest in specifically cultivating women's leadership talent (Ruderman and Hughes-James, 1998). However, cultivating women's talent requires awareness that women often face a wide range of barriers. These can be external barriers, such as hierarchy and gender-biased cultural beliefs and organizational practices, and internal barriers, such as internalized beliefs about women's roles and difficulty

with authentic self-expression, that can limit their leadership effectiveness.

## WLS fits within the goals of the G&D Program

***Our goal is to establish a culture in the CGIAR in which women can be themselves without that being a risk, which is often difficult in a traditionally male environment. This is not a one-off course. It is a series we have consciously and carefully built over the years, designed to build a cadre of women with the skills that will make the CGIAR more successful. The WLS also sends a powerful message to the world that women really matter to this organization.***

VICKI WILDE, G&D LEADER

**G&D'S COMPREHENSIVE** and ambitious goal of increasing the percentage of highly qualified developing country and female staff in the CGIAR Centers means more than increasing numbers. It means working to assure that all staff members' expertise is respected, that their voices are heard and their ability to reach their full potential as professionals, managers and leaders is supported.

G&D recognizes that making the CGIAR the organization of choice for women requires the provision of a work environment in which they can have a meaningful career and contribute to achieving the

organization's mandate while also having a happy, healthy life. The WLS has proven an important vehicle for addressing this challenge.

G&D also sponsors a variety of initiatives including research, diversity-positive recruitment, in-depth consultations with individual Centers to help them set and achieve goals for gender and diversity results, a mentoring program for young women and men scientists, and an on-line course for high performing global research teams. These activities are generated in consultation and discussions with the Centers to ensure their relevance and usefulness.

To be effective, women's leadership training must be geared toward enabling women to overcome these barriers – women, like men, must be effective in envisioning, initiating and guiding change. The literature identifies a number of impacts presumed to contribute to building leadership skills generally (see Figure 1 on page 6). These impacts provide participants with ideas and skills that enable them to think and act differently in response to the everyday leadership challenges they encounter. A key question is whether these impacts also help women to deal with the

leadership barriers they encounter in the workplace and to exercise a leadership role more effectively than they did in the past.

### Research assumptions

Two key assumptions concerning the notion of leadership development guided this research. The first assumption is that “leadership” and “authority” are not equal. Scholars have consistently and convincingly argued that leadership and authority are *distinct* notions yet there is often an implicit or explicit juxtaposition of individuals who are leaders with individuals who have positions of formal authority. In actuality, while an individual with formal authority in a given area can be said to be a leader, what defines her as such is not the authority vested in her position. Rather, it is her ability to inspire and guide others to bring about change or to address a complex problem.<sup>2</sup> From this view, anyone, irrespective of her station in an organizational structure, has the potential of becoming a leader.

This distinction is critical. The way we view leadership has a significant impact on how we study it. If we see leadership and authority as synonymous, then we are likely to regard anyone in a position of power as a leader. From this perspective, leadership development would be measured in terms of upward mobility and, thus, we would want to know about the role of the WLS in shaping the career trajectories of its alumnae.

If, on the other hand, we view leadership as the ability to envision, inspire and guide change, we would want to know whether and how participation in the WLS course has contributed to the effectiveness with which alumnae perform a wide variety of leadership roles. This research adopts the latter view.

The second assumption relates to the idea of “development”. The training of WLS participants takes place in an intense, week-long workshop. We recognize that significant behavioral change cannot be expected to take root devoid of practice in real-world settings. Thus, we assume that the WLS can be said to have had a positive impact if alumnae are able to apply and build on what they learned in their training when they re-enter their organizations and if they are able to work in, and lead,

### WLS approach: FOCUS ON UNIQUE NEEDS OF WORKING WOMEN

*Often women do not realize what they are capable of accomplishing because they have grown up in a patriarchal society that can have an eroding effect on women’s confidence. Thus, the Women’s Leadership Course not only introduces theory, it provides an opportunity for participants to put the theory into practice in a safe, women-only environment.*

DEE HAHN ROLLINS, LEADERSHIP COURSE DESIGNER/ INSTRUCTOR

*The main thing that my students take away is recognizing that they can make things happen, that they have choices.*

DEBORAH KOLB, NEGOTIATION COURSE INSTRUCTOR

**DURING THE INTENSIVE** training sessions, Dee Hahn Rollins of Training Resources Group (TRG), instructor of the Leadership Course, and Deborah Kolb, professor of the Simmons Graduate School of Management who designed and delivers the Negotiation Course, focus on the unique challenges of working women in multicultural workplaces. Since CGIAR staff members often work in teams, the Leadership Course concentrates on building teams and on giving and receiving feedback. The Negotiation Course raises awareness of choices and gives participants the strategic moves needed to influence positive outcomes.

Both the Leadership Course and the Negotiation Course explore the

participants’ unique experiences, looking at the role of gender in their leadership experience. This is followed by relevant theoretical input and the use of a variety of pedagogical methods to facilitate conceptual learning and skill development. The Leadership Course content includes feedback, communication, building high performing teams, and inspiring and creating a shared vision. In the Negotiation Course, within its overall goal of cultivating a sense of agency, participants examine how to determine the strength of their positions in negotiations, understand the perspectives of the person with whom they are negotiating and build coalitions. Syllabi of the two courses can be found in Annexes A and B.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that leadership and authority are *entirely* unrelated. Organizations often reward individuals with positions of greater authority on the basis of demonstrated leadership effectiveness.



multicultural and multidisciplinary teams more effectively. A less desirable scenario would be one in which the WLS alumnae fail to utilize what they learned simply because the effects of the training “wear off” when they return to their daily work routine, or because they are discouraged and prevented from exercising insights from the course by constraints they encounter within their organizations.

In either case, the training setting provides a place where participants are exposed to, and acquire, new ideas, skills and perspectives. It provides a starting point, but does not provide the space for new leadership skills to mature. Therefore, assessing the impact of leadership training requires understanding what new skills and understanding were acquired during training as well as how the training influenced practice in the organizational setting. It also requires comparing participants’ leadership practices prior to the training to their practices after training and determining how they differ.

### About this report

The CGIAR, a consortium of 15 agricultural research centers around the world, launched its Women’s Leadership Series (WLS) in 1995 with two aims: i) help women strengthen their leadership and management skills; and ii) strengthen the network of professional women in the CGIAR (Merrill-Sands, 1995). This study explores how the series’ Leadership and Negotiation Courses have impacted women’s leadership development in the CGIAR during a ten-year period.<sup>3</sup>

A Web survey was used to collect general information from alumnae about their experiences during the course(s) and their leadership challenges. It was also used to identify alumnae willing to be interviewed in depth. Those who were interviewed discussed

*I was one of the program leaders. I found myself writing a lot of project proposals for the program and winning some funds and keeping contacts with colleagues in other countries. This did not impress my boss very much. He said, “This woman is now turning to be a director more than myself. Whoever comes to this station has to see her first, has to ask about her.” He would say, “Ah, but this is just a lady. This is just a woman.” So instead of reflecting positively on me, somehow, it ended up being a conflict. And at a certain stage, I actually had to move elsewhere so I wouldn’t continue experiencing this kind of treatment.*

WLS PARTICIPANT

their leadership experiences before and after their training and identified the critical “breakthrough” moments they experienced during the WLS course. Analysis of these stories helps us examine how the leadership training affected the way alumnae handle a wide range of everyday leadership problems.

The findings suggest that the WLS has not only met, but exceeded, its original aims. The WLS catalyzed leadership transformation through i) the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, self-awareness, perspective and

confidence during the workshop and, subsequently, by ii) putting in motion a process of change resulting in new leadership practices. As a result of these transformational processes, the WLS participants are more effective in exercising leadership within their organizations today than they were before.

<sup>3</sup> The WLS is administered by the Gender and Diversity Program (G&D), a unit of the CGIAR Systems Office, and is open to women scientists and managers from all 15 research centers.

This report describes three categories of leadership transformations that were set into motion by the WLS. Those who came into the course as “hidden leaders” were transformed into “visible leaders”, “constrained leaders” were transformed into “enabled leaders” and “intuitive leaders” were transformed into “strategic leaders”.

The results are presented in seven sections as follows.

1. Standard Impacts of Leadership Training – briefly identifies common barriers to women’s leadership effectiveness and the general impacts of leadership training;
2. CGIAR Women Study Respondents – presents the demographics of the study participants;
3. Framework of Categories of Leaders and Types of Leadership Transformations – presents the analytic framework that emerged from the findings of this study;
4. Characteristics of Leadership Types – describes the distribution of leader types along the CGIAR women’s recruitment categories and positions;
5. Transforming Hidden Leaders into Visible Leaders – describes the first type of leadership transformation resulting from the WLS training;
6. Transforming Constrained Leaders into Enabled Leaders – describes the second type of leadership transformation resulting from the WLS;
7. Transforming Intuitive Leaders into Strategic Leaders – describes the final type of leadership transformation resulting from the WLS training.

A final section highlights the key conclusions and implications of the study. In addition, a series of annexes includes a description of the contexts of the WLS, the research methodology, in-depth leadership stories for each of the three types of leadership transformations and the syllabi of the WLS courses.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The leadership stories that appear in the text after a discussion of each type of transformation are shorter and less complex than those that appear in the annexes. Those in the text provide readers with a sense of the subtle ways in which the WLS impacted the everyday leadership practices of alumnae. For those who want more examples or want to examine more complex stories of leadership transformations, the stories in the annexes are recommended.



# Standard impacts of leadership training



Everyone is in agreement: most organizational cultures still make it harder for women to exercise leadership than it is for men. A large body of literature identifies a wide range of internal and external barriers that constrain women's leadership effectiveness.<sup>5</sup> Internal barriers come from within, such as individuals' self-limiting beliefs about their roles as women or their lack of self-confidence. External barriers are rooted in the environment, such as traditional hierarchies, cultural stereotypes, lack of access to critical developmental experiences and tokenism (see Table 1). Taken together it seems women still walk a different path than men.

**TABLE 1** Barriers to women's leadership effectiveness

BARRIER	SOURCE	EXPLANATION
Gender schema	Internal and External	Unconscious beliefs about gender differences lead to small but persistent differences in the treatment of women that, over the long term, result in significant gender inequality.
Participation in professional networks	External	Men's discomfort with women in the workplace and women's discomfort being the minority leads to social distance from members of the majority group. Consequently women are left out of information loops or have no one with whom they can discuss career issues.
Compensation	External	Persistent pay gaps exist, with men receiving higher compensation than women for the same or comparable jobs.
Evaluation guidelines	External	In the absence of clear performance measures, men tend to be evaluated more favorably than women.
Access to line positions	External	Women's lack of access to line positions means they have limited exposure to a mix of assignments, experiences and relationships and, thus, are less prepared for assuming more senior positions.
Treated as one-down	External	The tendency of majority group members in general, and men in particular, to view people who are different from their reference group as being deficient leads women to feel they are viewed as second class citizens.
Tokenism	External and Internal	Pressures of being the minority, especially at senior management levels, leads to chronic insecurity and isolation.
Female assertiveness	External and Internal	Women have to be assertive to be taken seriously, but if they are too assertive, they are open to ridicule from colleagues.
Discomfort working for women	External and Internal	Many men experience discomfort with, and resist the authority of, female managers.
Guilt	Internal	Women tend to assume the majority of household responsibilities out of guilt about shirking responsibilities as wives and mothers.
Defining success and failure	Internal	Women tend to attribute success to things other than self and take more responsibility for failures.
Lack of self-confidence	Internal	Some women, especially those from developing countries, may believe they are not capable of achieving career goals.
Balancing work-life demands	External and Internal	Women often are expected to assume most household responsibilities, even when they are the sole earners. Seeking to meet these expectations makes it difficult to balance their workload.

<sup>5</sup> Among works reviewed for this study are: Evans, 2000; Ruderman & Ohlott, 2002; Valian, 1999; Hefferman, 2004; Frankel, 2004; Williams & Frohlinger, 2004; Kolb, Williams & Frohlinger, 2004; Rosenthal, 1995; Little, 1991; Tang, 1992; Kim & Kim, 2001; Ackah & Heaton, 2003; Sheridan, 1998.

Sometimes these barriers are overt but, in many cases, they are subtle or covert – arising in everyday situations as the taken-for-granted way of doing business. Individually, the barriers may appear insignificant and trivial but as they accumulate, they produce significant disadvantages for women (Valian, 1999; Cole and Singer, 1991). That is why effective leadership training should enable women to counter both overt and subtle internal and external barriers that limit their leadership effectiveness. While leadership development programs for women have mushroomed, research does not tell us whether or how they may enable women to address such barriers more effectively.

Drawing from the leadership development literature, there are six training impacts presumed to build leadership capacity, namely: knowledge acquisition, increased self-awareness, perspective change, skill development, improved self-confidence and behavior change (Velsor, 1998; McCauley and Hughes-James, 1994; Young and Dixon, 1996; Markus, 2001; Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt, 2002). These six impacts are listed in Figure 1 and then briefly described in terms of how they are achieved in leadership training.

### How leadership training creates impacts

*Knowledge acquisition.* Theoretical and practical lessons introduce participants to concepts that can help them make sense of their experiences. They explore, for example, differences between management and leadership, emotional intelligence, personality styles, leadership styles, and ways of dealing with conflict and fostering collaboration.

FIGURE 1 Impacts of Leadership Training

■ Knowledge acquisition	■ Skill development
■ Self-awareness	■ Self-confidence
■ Perspective change	■ Behavior change

*Self-awareness increase.* Self-assessment instruments used in leadership development give participants an opportunity to learn more about how the theories presented in the classroom apply to their own lives and careers. For example, they may use the Myers Briggs inventory to assess personality type, or other instruments to identify leadership strengths and weaknesses. In addition to using these instruments, training provides an opportunity to use face-to-face feedback to increase participants' self awareness. When face-to-face feedback is compared to the results of a 360° feedback instrument, it can lead to increased self awareness and deep thinking about leadership style.

*Perspective change.* Acquiring knowledge and self-awareness often gives rise to new perspectives about one's self and one's work environment. For instance, some women hesitate to enter the negotiation process because they perceive it as conflict-ridden, but learning more about the process can lead to a change in perspective about the nature of negotiation itself. Increased self-awareness that comes from self-assessments can lead to surprising revelations that change how a woman looks at her abilities. It can also lead participants to question their assumptions or increase awareness of their unconscious behavioral patterns.



*Skill development.* The use of theoretical input combined with skill-building, self-awareness exercises and their associated perspective changes help women identify their skill gaps. Skill-building exercises, such as role play, facilitation, team-building games, diversity exercises, and giving and receiving feedback can be introduced in a classroom. However, their full incorporation into everyday leadership practice takes time because, at the beginning, these actions may feel “unnatural”.

*Self-confidence improvement.* Greater knowledge, development of new skills and greater self awareness build a woman’s confidence about her ability to manage leadership challenges more effectively. Knowledge provides participants with the conceptual foundation for diagnosing leadership challenges and strategies for action. Self-awareness gives participants a good sense of their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, i) recognition of strengths reinforces trainees’ confidence in their abilities while ii) recognition of weaknesses focuses attention on what is needed for improved leadership effectiveness. Skill-building exercises show participants how they can grow and develop in targeted areas.

*Behavior change.* Theoretical input, greater self-awareness, perspective change and improved confidence create a readiness for change, but fully incorporating these skills into behavior takes time, motivation and effort. Behavioral change is real when a participant draws on what she learned in training to respond to a workplace situation and her response is different from what it would have been before her training. Some behavior change, such as effectively participating in a difficult conversation, involves a complex series of thought processes and actions that are modified and refined through iterative practice.

### How training impacts lead to improved leadership

A key question for this study is whether and, if so, how these six impacts enable women to handle workplace barriers more effectively and, in turn, to exercise their leadership skills more effectively. A limited number of empirical studies have documented the impact of leadership development activities (Markus, 2001; Young and Dixon, 1996; Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt, 2002), some looking at the impacts of leadership development in mixed groups and a smaller number looking at the impacts of leadership development in groups composed solely of women.

These studies found that most participants of leadership training programs use the knowledge and skills acquired from the training when they return to their organizations. However, they do not provide insight into *how* training alters leadership practice. Specifically, previous studies left several questions unanswered.

- Did participants handle existing leadership challenges more effectively after training?  
The studies did not link changes in practice to dilemmas that existed prior to training.
- Were new behaviors directly related to the training?  
The studies did not systematically link changes in practice to specific insights gained from a training event.
- Were the knowledge and skills trainees acquired manifest in the handling of everyday leadership challenges?



The studies addressed change in broad areas of practice, not specific problematic situations and specific new behaviors.

Recognizing the need to have qualitative answers to these questions, this study explores the process of leadership development by looking at, and linking, three aspects of CGIAR women's leadership experience before, during and after the WLS, namely their:

- leadership experiences prior to training – in order to understand pre-existing areas of leadership successes and dilemmas and to establish focal areas for potential change;
- learning experiences and insights during the training, especially those related to leadership dilemmas experienced prior to the training event – in order to identify whether what they learned pertains to the focal area;
- leadership experiences after a training event, especially those that relate to the application of knowledge, skills and awareness acquired during training – in order to examine how key insights may have led to new behaviors related to the focal areas for change.

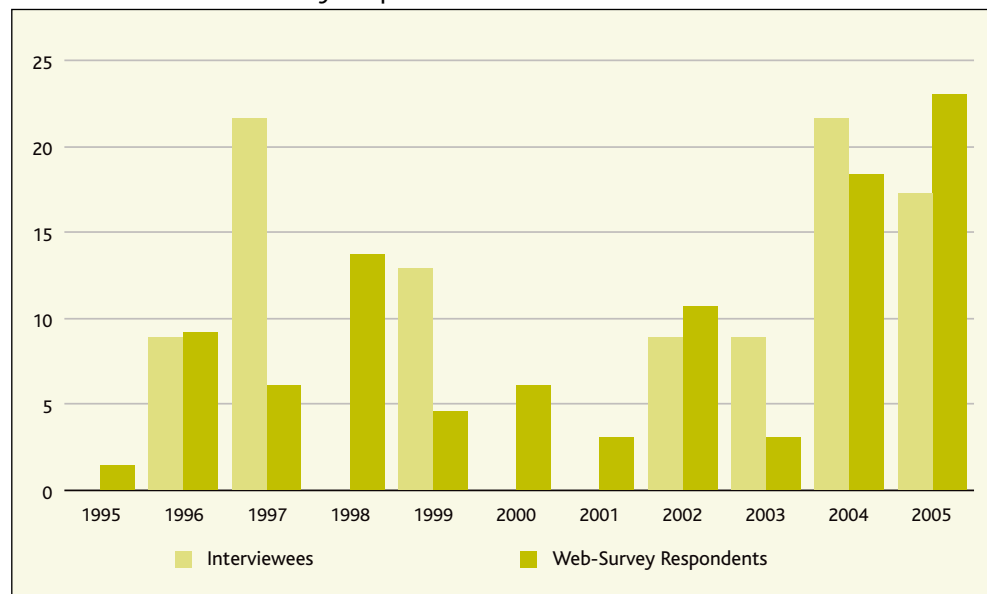
This study is based on the assumption that increasing understanding of these three periods in the leadership development process enables us to understand the impact of the CGIAR Women's Leadership Series.

# Respondents to the WLS Study

# 3

This section identifies the women who participated in this study according to their Center and their position. It also summarizes how they view impacts of the WLS on their careers. Although their confidentiality is protected, it is important to know the characteristics of the respondents, both those who responded to the Web survey (76 alumnae or one quarter of all WLS participants) and those who participated in the telephone interviews (24 alumnae).<sup>6</sup> Figures 2 to 5 describe various features of this sample and the narrative provides comparisons of alumnae who responded to the survey and those who were interviewed.

**FIGURE 2** Years Web-survey respondents and interviewees attended WLS

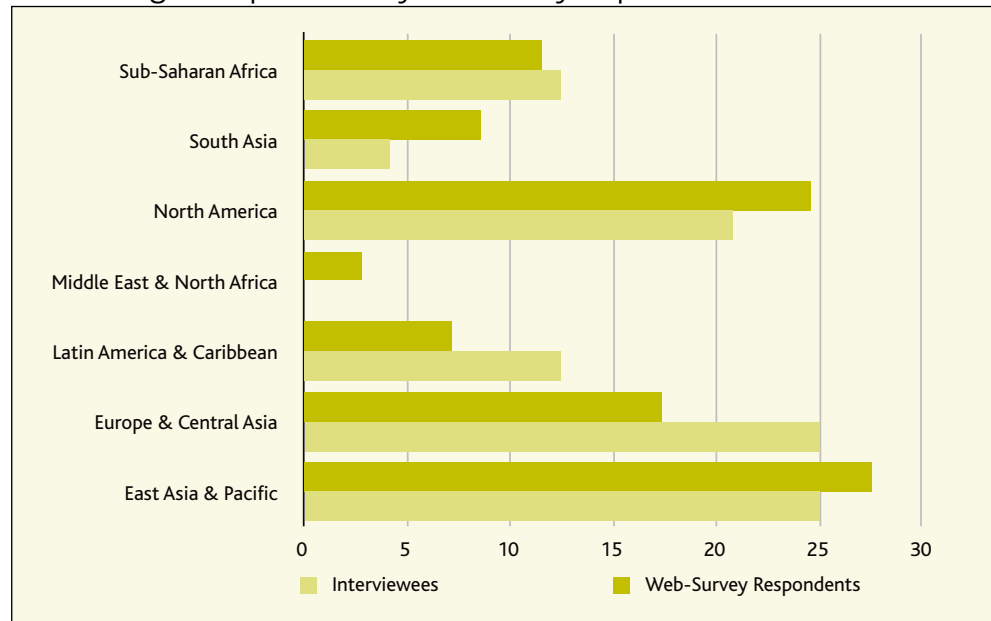
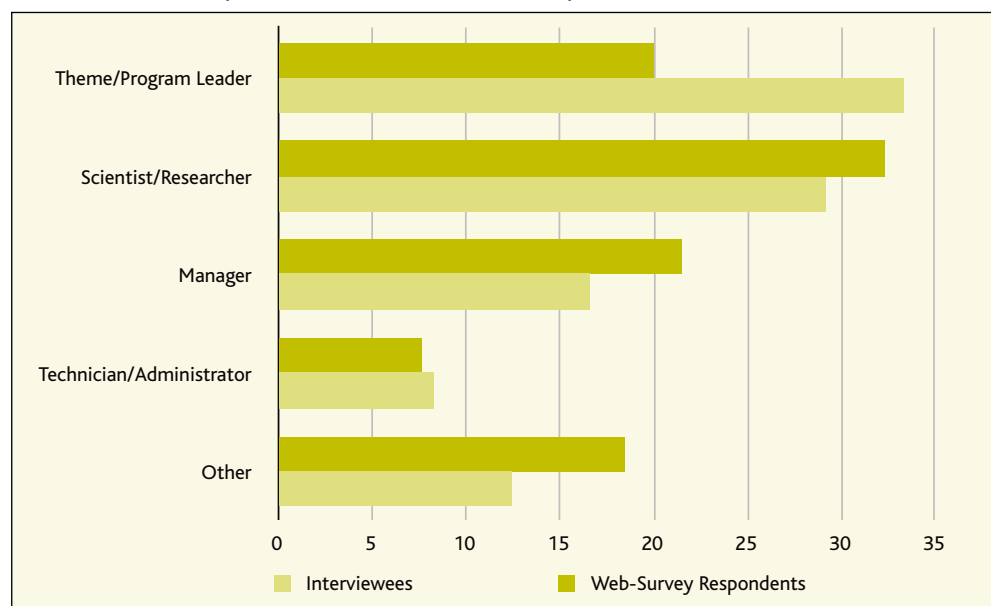


NOTE: The years 1995, 1998, 2000 and 2001 were not represented among interviewees.

## Employment status with CGIAR

Web-survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they were still employed by the CGIAR and, if not, to indicate the reasons for their departure. Of the 76 respondents, 65, or 85.5 percent, were still employed in a CGIAR Center. The 10 respondents (13 percent) no longer working in the CGIAR system offered a range of reasons for their departures, including: poor work environment (three); contract ended (three); career ceiling for person without a Ph.D. (one); staff reduction (one); moved for unspecified personal and professional reasons (one); and no reason given (one). As for those who agreed to be interviewed, all but one was employed by the CGIAR at the time of this study.

6 The methodology used in this study is described in detail in Annex C.

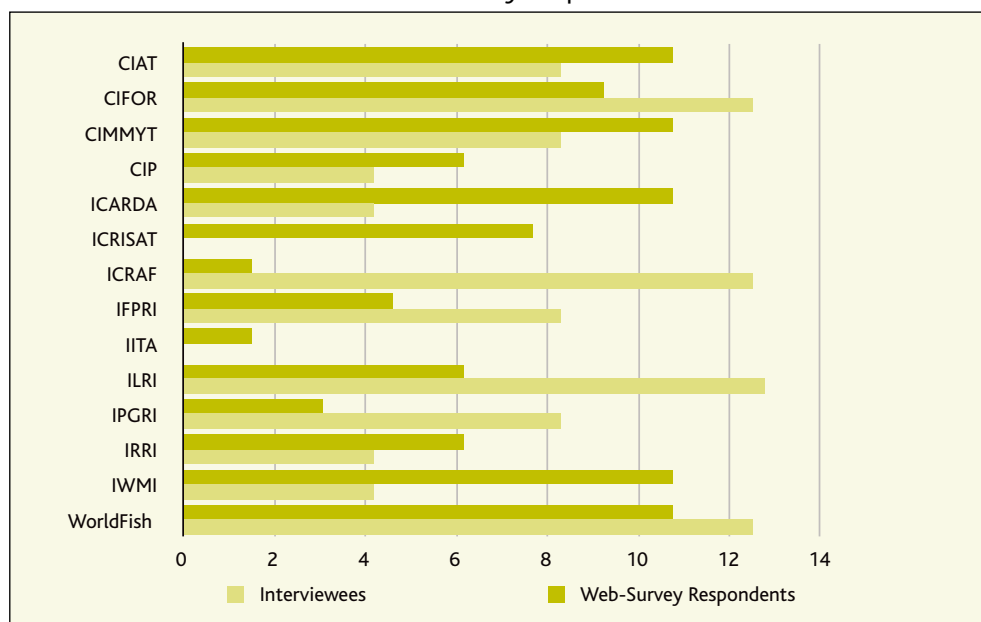
**FIGURE 3** Regions represented by Web-survey respondents and interviewees**FIGURE 4** Current positions of Web-survey respondents and interviewees

### Leadership barriers

Web-survey respondents were asked to identify a leadership situation or problem encountered at work, to describe how they handled the situation and to indicate what obstacles they may have encountered in handling the problem. The responses identified a wide range of everyday leadership problems, situations and barriers to exercising effective leadership. It is interesting to note that several of these situations and barriers, reflected in Table 2, were also identified in the theoretical literature. Other barriers, those that reflect the unique context of the WLS, are not reflected in the literature. Because of lack of detail in the responses of Web-survey respondents, it is difficult to determine whether the barriers they identified were internal (rooted in patterns of thought) or external (emanating from constraints in the environment such as hierarchy and gender-biased cultural beliefs and organizational practices). However, the leadership stories of interviewees provide detailed insight into the nature of some of these barriers.

The findings from the interviews are discussed in detail in the sections “Transforming Hidden Leaders into Visible Leaders”, “Transforming Constrained Leaders into Enabled Leaders” and “Transforming Intuitive into Strategic Leaders”. These three sections provide concrete stories that illustrate how the WLS course improved the participants’ abilities to handle various types of everyday leadership challenges. The section “Conclusion and Implications” looks at the roots of some of these challenges and raises questions concerning the impact these structural barriers may have on women’s leadership potential in the CGIAR.

**FIGURE 5** Research Centers of web-survey respondents and interviewees



**TABLE 2** Everyday leadership challenges identified by CGIAR WLS alumnae

EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN	PERCENTAGE
Managing conflict	20.6
Managing and motivating employees and stakeholders	19.0
Leading and managing change and transition	7.9
Gaining rightful recognition	7.9
Creating effective teams and partnerships	6.4
Time management	6.4
Being assertive	4.8
Communications	3.2
Others	23.8
INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP	PERCENTAGE
Institutional resistance to change	25.7
Unreceptive or unsupportive top management	18.6
Lack of budget/resources	10.0
Lack of communication	8.6
Managing virtual and diverse teams	7.1
Conflict, politics and territorial games	5.7
Workload issues	5.6
Problems dealing with woman in authority	4.3
Others	14.4

**NOTE:** Based on 63 respondents to “Everyday leadership challenges” and 70 respondents to “Institutional barriers to effective leadership”.



## Relevance and impact of WLS

Web-survey respondents were asked to indicate the relevance and impact of the WLS training on their current leadership effectiveness. This was key because the goal of this research was to determine whether alumnae feel the WLS has helped them exercise leadership more effectively in their work.

**Relevance:** In terms of course relevance, 85.5 percent of respondents indicated that the WLS course was “very relevant” to the leadership issues they encountered in their work and 14.5 percent felt it was “somewhat relevant”.

**Impact:** Assessments of course impact among Web-survey respondents were more varied with 56.6 percent indicating the course had “very positive” impact, 39.5 percent indicating “somewhat positive” impact and the remaining 3.9 percent indicating “neither positive nor negative” impact. This breakdown compares to 96 percent of interviewees indicating that the WLS course had a “very positive” impact on their leadership effectiveness. This suggests that the information from the phone interviews does not reflect all the possible leadership experiences of the WLS alumni. The “Conclusions and Implications” section considers some of the reasons for these differences.

# Framework of types of leaders and types of leadership transformations

# 4

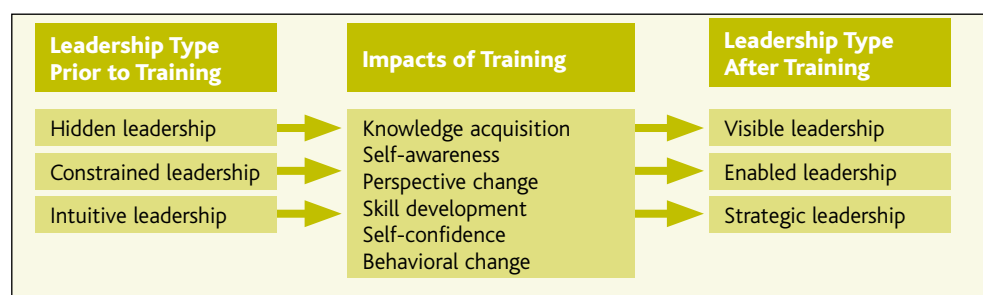
This section describes a conceptual framework that emerged from the analysis of interview data.<sup>7</sup> The framework offers insight into how leadership training can actually impact women's leadership development by linking i) developmental needs before training and ii) change in behavior after training. Specifically, of the 24 WLS alumnae interviewed, 23 felt the WLS had a "very positive" impact on their leadership development. Detailed analysis of their leadership stories gave rise to the core themes represented in the framework of "types of leaders and types of leadership transformations". One person said that the WLS course did not have any impact on her leadership development.<sup>8</sup>

The framework (depicted in Figure 6) expands the concept of leadership development described in the section "Standard Impacts of Leadership Training" (depicted in Figure 1). Specifically, the current framework goes beyond identifying training impacts – it provides insight into how training may alter leadership practice.

Figure 6 illustrates the impact of the WLS training on three types of leaders and their subsequent transformations. The three leader types in the first category – hidden leader, constrained leader and intuitive leader – indicate leadership category *prior to* the WLS. These types of leaders, identified in the left column, might pertain to individuals entering any leadership training event. The leader types identified in the right column – visible leader, enabled leader and strategic leader – indicate leadership category *after* the WLS.

The study indicates that participants come to the WLS with different leadership dilemmas. Leadership training can be said to have had an impact if, after the training, these participants handle their leadership dilemmas differently and more effectively.

**FIGURE 6** Types of leaders and types of leadership transformations



<sup>7</sup> The analytic process that resulted in the framework is described in detail in Annex C.

<sup>8</sup> Because the experience of this one individual failed to fit the pattern in the data set as a whole it could not be meaningfully incorporated into the framework. The interviewee felt that the WLS course she took was not helpful to her because: the case studies used in the course were applicable to for-profit organizations not to development organizations, she had already mastered the knowledge and skill explored in the course, and she wanted more interaction with participants.

Specifically, those who came to the course as “hidden leaders” were transformed into “visible leaders”. Those who came to the course as “constrained leaders” were transformed into “enabled leaders”. Finally, those who came to the course as “intuitive leaders” were transformed into “strategic leaders”. Each of these leadership transformations resulted from a learning “breakthrough” brought about by the WLS. Next, we consider organizational characteristics of individuals who make up the leadership types represented in these three transformations.



# Organizational characteristics of leadership types



The broad distribution of all three pre-WLS leadership types across recruitment categories and position types, as shown in Table 3, reflect characteristics of the interview sample, not the Web-survey respondents. The pattern revealed here clearly shows that either hierarchical progression nor recruitment category are indications of the nature and level of leadership skill. Hidden leaders, constrained leaders and intuitive leaders can be found at every level of the hierarchy and among international, regional and national staff.

Information from the qualitative interviews is used to illustrate the three transformation processes depicted in Figure 6 by focusing on four key issues:

- leadership practices prior to the WLS;
- factors that shaped these practices;
- impact of the WLS courses in relation to leadership challenges prior to the course;
- leadership practices after the WLS.

Examples and quotes provided by interviewees (whose names and employment details have been changed for confidentiality) are provided throughout the explanations of the transformation processes. More detailed accounts are provided as Leadership Stories at the end of each section.

**TABLE 3** Leadership type, recruitment category and position type of 76 Web-survey respondents

LEADERSHIP TYPE	% OF TOTAL	% OF RECRUITMENT CATEGORY	% OF POSITION TYPE
Hidden	22	International: 60 National: 20 Regional: 20	Theme leader: 0 Program leader: 20 Scientist/Researcher: 40 Manager: 20 Technician/Administrator: 20 Other: 0
Constrained	52	International: 50 National: 33 Regional: 17	Theme leader: 8 Program leader: 25 Scientist/Researcher: 33 Manager: 17 Technician/Administrator: 0 Other: 17
Intuitive	26	International: 67 National: 33 Regional: 0	Theme leader: 17 Program leader: 17 Scientist/Researcher: 17 Manager: 17 Technician/Administrator: 17 Other: 17



# Transforming hidden leaders into visible leaders



Hidden leaders are those who tend to suppress their ideas, insights, knowledge and skills. This suppression results from internal and external factors as well as the interaction of the two. In this study, the hidden leaders who were interviewed had all been raised and socialized in developing countries. In the culture of most of these countries, personal qualities of modesty are highly prized.<sup>9</sup> Several individuals in this group pointed out that cultural values regarding the importance of modesty played a role in their leadership practices prior to the WLS. While these values may have been effective in the non-Western cultures in which they were socialized, in the international, perhaps Westernized, organizational culture of the CGIAR Centers, these practices made them invisible and inhibited their leadership effectiveness. If the CGIAR has a culture that tends to reward the vocal and the visible, women who come from cultures that encourage them to be silent tend to be marginalized with their real potential kept hidden.

## The transformation process

The WLS breakthrough for hidden leaders resulted from three types of training impact: increased self-awareness, change of perspective and improved self-confidence. Post-WLS stories demonstrate that these impacts put into motion a significant change in the practices of hidden leaders. This was manifest in their increased willingness to express their ideas and insights, and to share knowledge that could improve team and organizational processes and products. While the new practices of visible leadership provide evidence that the WLS training enabled hidden leaders to overcome internal barriers, visible leadership practices could only mitigate, not overcome, the impact of some external barriers.

### Practices of hidden leadership

Hidden leaders do not believe in themselves. They lack personal agency – the ability to influence others or to change their work environments. Despite their skills and contributions, they tend to give attribution and to bestow agency to others. This belief is created and sustained through “internal self-limiting talk” (Morrin, 1993). In a striking example of the internal dialogue of a hidden leader, Claudia<sup>10</sup> stated that before the WLS, she felt that she was “a nobody”. Despite positive performance feedback from her boss, it was difficult for her to see the importance of her role in the program. “I got very good feedback, but I saw it as: ‘It’s not me. I’m not doing this. It’s my good boss. And I’m just supporting’.”

Self-limiting talk was expressed in several different ways by other hidden leaders. For example, prior to the WLS, several hidden leaders did not believe their ideas were

<sup>9</sup> Many of the hidden leaders used the term “modesty” in describing what was considered a virtue in their cultures and some said this virtue also applied to men. This is not to say that modesty means the same for men and women, but we do not have any data on this in this study.

<sup>10</sup> Interview segments with WLS alumnae are interspersed throughout this paper along with leadership stories at the end of each section and in-depth interviews in annexes. All names and employment data have been changed to protect confidentiality.

valuable. Even when others tried to encourage them by pointing out that they did have something valuable to offer, hidden leaders nonetheless tended to suppress their ideas because they did not really believe that the organization would value them. They did not feel they could effect any change by sharing their insights.

The pre-WLS stories suggest that self-limiting talk resulted in three categories of behavior: self-censorship, risk aversion and the inability to establish presence. Self-censorship often manifest itself through silence. For example, if Ayana was called into a last minute meeting, she kept silent, thinking: “If I say something, how would it be taken?” Self-censorship also occurred when hidden leaders felt they had something important to say but were afraid to voice their thoughts. In this situation, they encouraged others to speak up instead. This dynamic is described by Claudia:

*Before the course, I would hide behind people. If I had a good idea, or if I thought we should do something, I would not come out alone as the one suggesting it. Instead, I would ask somebody else, “What do you think? Should we do this?” And then I would step back. I wouldn’t want the idea to come from me.*

Claudia’s behavior is typical of one who avoids risks, closely guarding herself against possible negative reaction and rejection. Whether it was a big or small matter, she would never act out of her own volition – she would always ask permission of an authority figure first. Another risk avoidance approach taken by some hidden leaders was to do extra work but to do it quietly in order to safeguard themselves against negative comments and criticism.

In some situations, the inability of hidden leaders to establish their presence in a group cloaked their capabilities, ideas and potential contributions. This was the problem Ayana faced during a memorable team meeting in which the group was discussing how to develop a Web-based communication strategy. Ayana had been working to develop such a strategy – without anyone’s knowledge – and had some well formed ideas. However, when she spoke up, she found herself drowned out – made invisible – by a more assertive speaker who was able to inspire confidence in her ability to take on the task. Ayana described this scenario stating:

*The topic of communication strategy came to the table and I thought, “Oh, I’m doing these things already.” I tried to push myself to speak about my work – what I’m doing, what I’m finding on the Web. Then, I felt intimidated when another colleague, she’s a very strong communicator, came out with absolutely the same ideas, but she said them loudly. So when my boss said, “Oh, that’s wonderful,” I spoke up and said, “Well, isn’t that what I just said? I thought I had communicated this.” And then he got very confused.*

### Source of hidden leadership practices

Some hidden leaders accounted for their self-limiting thought patterns by citing age-related insecurity, fear of rejection and social isolation, and the belief that others had better and more valuable ideas than they. In addition to these internal factors, some hidden leaders suggested that external factors rooted in societal and

organizational biases and practices also gave rise to their self-limiting talk. Specifically, organizational hierarchy, gender stereotypes and the pervasiveness of practices that sustain these stereotypes conspire to keep a woman's unique contribution to organizational performance suppressed. The impact of these external factors can be seen in the cases of Eva (Leadership Story 1, on page 5) and Angela (Annex D). Eva encountered two formidable barriers in her quest to become more visible within her Center, namely: i) the Center's rigid hierarchy and ii) being encouraged to perform stereotypically female tasks and discouraged from tasks that were stereotypically male. Both factors obscured her strategic capabilities while highlighting her "secretarial" skills.



Finally, some hidden leaders offered a cultural explanation – indicating that, in some situations, there is an interaction between internal and external constraints. In this case, the reasoning of hidden leaders involved the application of out-of-context cultural rules to situations they encountered in their Centers. For instance, for the hidden leaders whose national cultures considered modesty a virtue and prescribed that one's accomplishments should become known only when others point them out, there can be discomfort with assertiveness. In a story described in detail in Annex D, Angela, a woman raised in an Asian country, described her initial discomfort with the culture of assertiveness in her Center stating:

*I had been raised with this idea that women shouldn't speak too much. But also, not just women, but tooting your own horn was not a good thing. In my country, the culture is very much that you should be modest.*

## Impact of the WLS Courses

The process put in motion by WLS activities for fostering self awareness and perspective change resulted in significant learning breakthroughs for hidden leaders. These information and skill components provided hidden leaders with new ways of understanding the situations they faced and for acting upon them more effectively. The most important learning outcome for hidden leaders came from feedback that challenged their beliefs about personal agency.

### Learning from feedback

Providing feedback is crucial in both the Negotiation and Leadership Courses. In the Negotiation Course, feedback is provided during or after structured experiential exercises. In the Leadership Course, feedback comes from two sources: other course participants and 360° feedback provided in advance by the participant's work colleagues.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the Leadership Course, the trainers create small groups that meet regularly for the entire training period. At the end of each day, the group members give each other feedback concerning their observations of one another. This feedback is written, read aloud by the writer in front of the small group, and then the hard copy is given to the recipient of the feedback. The 360° feedback instrument administered prior to the course is interpreted during the course. Evidence from this study suggests

<sup>11</sup> WLS alumnae received feedback on their leadership skills in several competency areas by means of an assessment instrument developed by TRG, Inc. This instrument was administered to their peers, subordinates and bosses.



hat the feedback from one or both of these sources brings heightened self-awareness and change in perspective and results in hidden leaders questioning the validity of beliefs about their lack of personal agency. At least three significant breakthroughs in self-awareness can be reported.

#### **Hidden leaders are not invisible**

Despite the best efforts of hidden leaders to cloak aspects of themselves, they were not invisible – others noticed their lack of active participation. For instance, based on the 360° feedback, Claudia was surprised to discover that her colleagues had noticed her quick temper which she thought she had been effective in hiding. After receiving this feedback, she accepted, “Yes, it’s true. These people are not lying. So somebody has seen me.”

#### **Hiding can have a negative interpretation**

At best, hiding behavior was interpreted in neutral terms but, as some discovered, it was also interpreted negatively. This was the case for Rosaria. During the team feedback segment of the Leadership Course, Rosaria’s teammates told her they could not provide her with feedback because she had been silent. This turned out to be powerful feedback. Rosaria realized that her silence made it difficult for others to assess her strengths and weaknesses.

Feedback from her colleagues at work, however, was less neutral. One comment she received from the 360° feedback was that she was “unimaginative”, yet she knew she had a lot of ideas and a lot to say. She did not say anything because she was afraid of rejection if her ideas proved to be unpopular. The feedback made her feel misunderstood. Thus, the feedback obtained from other workshop participants enabled hidden leaders to recognize that hiding behavior had hidden social costs.

#### **Perspectives and ideas are appreciated**

Feedback enabled hidden leaders to recognize, often for the first time, that their suppressed perspectives were appreciated by others and beneficial for the organization. After giving detailed written feedback to each of her team members, Rosaria’s teammates expressed their appreciation and surprise at the depth and quality of her feedback. They told her that because of her silence, they had not realized how insightful, imaginative and observant she was. With the positive and enthusiastic feedback from her colleagues, Rosaria gained confidence in the value of her ideas.

A cross-cutting outcome of this positive feedback from others was that hidden leaders recognized that they had something valuable to offer. This recognition led to a change in perspective about their personal agency. Not only did hidden leaders leave the WLS feeling they had something good and useful to offer, they left feeling empowered and determined to contribute what had previously been suppressed. Ayana articulated this new posture when she said she felt empowered: “I felt that I had all this energy. I wasn’t using it before and it was time to use it.”

#### **Practices of visible leadership**

Although WLS alumnae described having moments of insight and radical perspective change during the course, this study asked the crucial question as to whether the change was sustained after the course. Did it produce new leadership behavior? The difference between the hidden leaders’ pre- and post-WLS leadership stories suggest

that the WLS put into motion a process that had its own momentum, namely that hidden leaders started to practice new behaviors that led to a slow but steady transformation from hidden leaders to visible leaders.

Pre-WLS, hidden leaders described self-limiting thoughts, but post-WLS, they described “catching themselves” and consciously interrupting and changing self-limiting talk into self-empowering thoughts. For instance, when faced with a moment of doubt, Claudia would recall lessons learned from the course and tell herself: “If everyone in the course saw something of value in me, then there must be something in me that I’m not seeing and I need to be more aware of it.” She also would think more objectively about her contributions to the organization and focus on the positive impact she was making: “I was able to see how well things have worked out. I saw that I am the one who is doing this and this and that. I have some leadership skills, but I need to appreciate them more.”

When she caught herself determining not to take a risk or to keep silent, Claudia would tell herself: “I have to stop being afraid. The worst is that they won’t like it or they’ll say ‘no’, but I won’t die.”

Self-limiting thoughts create a belief in the lack of personal agency. This thought process, in turn, is sustained by the belief it created in the first place. Therefore, by interrupting the cycle and engaging in self-empowering thoughts, hidden leaders begin to chip away at their earlier belief system, slowly replacing it with a new belief system in which they recognize their personal agency. The cultivation of the new belief system is a sign of having made the transformation from hidden leader to visible leader.

In their post-WLS stories, visible leaders strongly expressed the belief that they mattered and had things of value to offer to the organization. They no longer belittled their impact, saying they wanted their contributions to be visible and appropriately appreciated by the organization. This belief did not materialize overnight – it took time to develop as they engaged in, and acted upon, self-empowering thoughts.

Self-empowering thoughts gave hidden leaders the courage to act differently when presented with situations where they could contribute to their teams. Instead of censoring themselves, they began to speak up. Those who were stifled by risk aversion saw they could handle and survive any adverse reactions. Those who had been silenced by others found that they could now establish their presence. Those who had done work invisibly decided to make their contributions known and worked at ensuring their work was appropriately recognized. Those who found themselves hidden by external forces, such as organizational hierarchy and gender stereotypes, learned to create “structural holes” through which their skills could seep out and attract the attention of key decision-makers.

Leadership Stories 1 and 2 and Annex D provide detailed accounts of three hidden leaders. Although identifying features have been disguised, their stories illustrate themes related to pre-WLS practices, learning breakthroughs during the WLS and post-WLS leadership practices with rich, contextually specific accounts.

## Eva: A Story of Hidden Leadership

### The Struggle for Independence and Visibility

One of Eva's main leadership challenges was gaining independence and visibility in her Center. Even though she headed a unit and her job required leadership, she felt that that her job was treated as merely operational. She was encouraged to perform culturally female roles – such as taking notes – and discouraged from performing culturally male roles – such as strategy formulation and making policy decisions. Thus, some of her skills were visible to key decision-makers but others were not. Her leadership story centers on struggles to overcome gender stereotypes, hierarchical barriers and cultural practices that frustrated her attempts to make her strategic work visible. To a lesser extent, her story is about how she discovered and overcame her own internal barriers to independence and visibility.

As head of her unit, she developed criteria for deciding salary increases for international staff and proceeded to present these criteria and her recommendations to the head of the division (her boss's boss). When her immediate boss found out that she had not consulted him, he was furious and said that he did not want to be responsible for her office if she were going to take things directly to the division head.

However, she felt it inappropriate to go through her immediate boss because she was making recommendations on international staff salary and he was in that category. Because he was very angry, she proposed that they discuss the issue with their mutual boss. This resulted in a clear articulation of the situations under which it was appropriate for her to go to her immediate boss and the situations under which it was appropriate for her to go to the head of the division.

This conversation helped to create a small opening through which she could make her skills and abilities more visible to people beyond her immediate boss.

*It was only after many years that I would gain some independence and more consideration for my ideas. I was very good at taking notes and minutes in the meetings and I still like to do it. But, the only thing they saw about my work was, "Oh, she's very good about taking notes." They used my skills for that but not for other important things like strategizing, so it became a barrier.*

The difficulty she had gaining visibility in the salary scale story was symptomatic of the broader challenge of making her skills and interests in stereotypically male activities visible in the context of a rigid hierarchical structure. Many of the strategic decisions she made and the policies she formulated were presented at the management meeting by her boss who took credit for her work.

Although she had some success in gaining visibility in the story described above, she still felt she lacked the skills to counteract the processes that threatened to keep her invisible. This was where the WLS course had its greatest impact. The concepts such as personality type and skills such as advocating and building alliances, self-awareness and confidence acquired from the WLS course broadened the repertoire of responses she had in her toolkit to respond to external inhibiting processes.



She also discovered during the WLS that she unconsciously suppressed her voice through silence. The WLS participants pointed out to her that, while she had many good ideas, it appeared to them that she did not recognize the value of what she brought. They discussed her insecurity and shyness, and urged her to speak up. This affirming feedback gave her a boost in self-confidence that was further strengthened when she saw other women in the WLS who, like her, did not recognize their value.

*... It was a powerful lesson, seeing other people who haven't developed the way to make their value visible in their Centers. Looking at those examples and seeing them as people who could grow gave me strength to grow, too.*

When she returned to her Center after the course, she enthusiastically applied the skills she had gained, with impressive results. She was more effective in making her work visible and in reframing her role within the Center. With increased recognition of her talents and skills, she received a significant promotion and her job classification was changed from national to international staff.

However, she continued to feel she was only "somewhat effective" as a leader because, while she had changed, the organization had not. The structural constraints were deeply entrenched and continued to make the exercise of leadership a taxing and challenging endeavor requiring ever more complex leadership development.

*I think I am still "somewhat effective" as a leader because the gender issues within the organization cannot change overnight. I have changed. I have tried my best to grow and as a result, I think I have gained the space to express myself more fully, I have gained in terms of leadership, I have gained respect and I have gone up in the organization. But there are still gender stereotypes, attitudes and behaviors that limit my leadership effectiveness as a woman.*

## Rosaria: A Story of Hidden Leadership

### Coming Out and Expressing Oneself

The WLS course was instrumental in Rosaria's improved ability to handle the stress of an overseas assignment. When Rosaria was promoted from a national position in her home country to a regional position in a neighboring country, she saw the move as an opportunity for professional growth. Due to her limited managerial experience, she was unsure about her ability to handle the demands of her job but she took the risk. The positive possibilities far outweighed her fear of failure.

The adjustment was fraught with stress at home and work. In her previous job, she had only interacted with people from her country. Now she interacted with culturally diverse people from all over the world. While these interactions posed new challenges, there were particular problems with colleagues from one country. When interactions left her feeling hurt and angry, her response was to avoid the perpetrators, even when this meant that the work suffered.

*It was not helping me to be silent, in the sense that I was raising stress in myself. I kept thinking about it and the tension was building inside me. This affected my performance, my dealings with others, and because I had tension that I had not released, it showed in my actions.*

She was also hesitant to express her feelings and thoughts in meetings. When asked why by her boss, she simply attributed it to cultural differences. The truth was that she was afraid expressing ideas would lead others to reject her.

The biggest breakthrough for Rosaria during the WLS course came from feedback from other course participants who felt that Rosaria had offered the most thorough and insightful feedback to them, yet none could offer her any feedback in return. She had been so silent, they did not know what to say. This itself was an important realization – her silence prevented others from having a sense of her strengths and weaknesses.

When one participant pointed out that Rosaria had been able to offer insightful comments because she was a skilled observer, members of her group advised her to share her thoughts more often. This was an epiphany – she knew she was a very creative and imaginative person but her co-workers did not know this because she never shared her thoughts for fear of rejection. The feedback gave her confidence that her ideas were good and would be beneficial.

The feedback also gave her confidence in her ability to make insightful observations and work effectively in cross-cultural teams. She became seen as the person able to offer the most helpful feedback to the most difficult employees.

Her confidence in her ability also affected how she participated in meetings. No longer afraid of being ostracized, she offered her ideas in group discussions. Her co-workers noticed the change and gratefully acknowledged and encouraged her participation.

# Transforming constrained leaders into enabled leaders



Constrained leaders are those whose leadership effectiveness is limited by lack of conceptual knowledge or skill development. The practices of constrained leaders arise from internal sources such as personal characteristics and experiences, external sources such as culture, or from the interaction of both. The breakthrough in leadership development for constrained leaders comes from knowledge acquisition and skill development that, in turn, give rise to other impacts of self-awareness, perspective change and confidence.

In many cases, the constrained leaders interviewed for this study were fairly young or inexperienced, or they were new to the CGIAR organization. In most cases they were experiencing minority dynamics as the only women in their teams or programs.

## The transformation process

One of the most powerful changes after the WLS for constrained leaders was a strong sense of direction and perspective change for handling pre-existing leadership challenges. This sense of direction was created primarily by new knowledge and skill development which enabled leaders to understand the source of their leadership difficulties. Enabled leadership was demonstrated by an understanding and recognition of previously neglected dimensions and the acquisition of skills related to those dimensions. Enabled leaders not only overcame internal barriers, they were also able to overcome some of the external barriers they encountered.

### Practices of constrained leadership

In their pre-WLS leadership stories, constrained leaders described three types of behaviors or practices that reflected difficulties in managing interpersonal relationships: inaction in problematic situations, self-isolation and mismanagement of negative emotions.<sup>12</sup> Because they often lacked experience, constrained leaders were not fully aware that a problematic thing had occurred, and when they did find out, they did not know how to rectify the problem.

#### Inaction

Often inaction, the inability to formulate a response to a problematic situation, occurs in organizational activities for which constrained leaders have limited experience and savvy. The story of Anita illustrates the cause and consequence of inaction.

Prior to accepting a full-time job with her Center, Anita had worked there as a consultant. When her supervisor decided to hire someone full time, Anita interviewed for the position. As the recruitment process was drawing to a close, she explained:

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12 This is very significant because leadership is fundamentally a process of getting things done through people.

*We sat down for a working session with my supervisor and he liked what I had to offer. So he said, okay, we can draw up a contract for you and he left the negotiation of the rate to someone else. I went in totally unprepared for a tough negotiation. The gentleman I was negotiating with casually asked me a few questions about what I was getting where, and so on, and based on that, he made an offer. They fixed the rate at the same level that I had working part-time, but my time commitment had tripled.*

Later, in a conversation with a colleague, she found out that the salary was exceptionally low. She should have asked for three times as much, but she did not have enough experience to negotiate.



### **Isolation**

This refers to a situation in which a constrained leader avoids, or is avoided by, individuals or groups whose cooperation is needed to accomplish a task. Isolation can therefore be the result of one's own or others' actions. Harriet's pre-WLS leadership story illustrates the practice of self-isolation.

When Harriet was hired, she had been out of graduate school for only three years. She lacked the experience for leading and managing a multicultural, virtual and multidisciplinary team. In addition, her Center was new and undergoing a lot of growing pains. She found the flux and fluidity of the organization unsettling and stressful. To compound this, many of her colleagues had worked together before and knew each other well. She was new, the only female, the youngest and the only single person. She felt self-conscious and uncomfortable with her male colleagues and overwhelmed by the managerial and leadership aspects of her job. On the other hand, she felt comfortable and confident in her own technical skills and reacted by withdrawing from social interaction at work, such as lunchtime get-togethers, and concentrated on getting her technical work done.

### **Mismanagement of negative emotions**

This is a behavior of constrained leaders who have inability to handle emotions such as anger appropriately and effectively. Harriett and Josephine both had trouble with this.

Harriett described instances when her anger at her boss over her perception of his incompetence turned into "fierce fights". Josephine did not "fight", but her inability to manage the anger and pain she felt as a result of her boss's hostility had led her to leave her previous job.

*I was one of the program leaders. I found myself writing a lot of project proposals for the program and winning some funds and keeping contacts with colleagues in other countries. This did not impress my boss very much. He said, "This woman is now turning to be a director more than myself. Whoever comes to this station has to see her first, has to ask about her." He would say, "Ah, but this is just a lady. This is just a woman." So instead of reflecting positively on me, somehow, it ended up being a conflict. And at a certain stage, I actually had to move elsewhere so I wouldn't continue experiencing this kind of treatment.*

## Source of constrained leadership practices

Faulty reasoning lies at the center of the difficulties involved in each of the practices described above. As in the case of hidden leaders, these faulty thought processes arise from internal sources such as personal characteristics and experiences, external sources such as culture, or in some cases, from an interaction of both.

Inaction often occurs when constrained leaders apply out-of-context concepts and expectations to situations encountered in their work settings. This is a case in which there is an interaction between internal and external processes.

In the case of Anita, her faulty, out-of-context expectations had cultural, or external, roots. It was a revelation to her when she learned from her colleague that she could have negotiated and asked for three times as much as she was offered. Her expectations, regarding the role of the employer and employee, turned out to be inconsistent with the negotiation rules in her Center. She had expected that the Center would: i) have a transparent pay scale, ii) assign her place on this scale based on background and experience, and iii) make an equitable offer based on her record. She also assumed that her role was to i) demonstrate competence so that the employer could make a proper assessment and ii) decide whether to accept or reject the employer's offer.

Her lack of understanding of the rules governing the salary-setting practice of her Center put her at a disadvantage as a salary negotiator. In fact, she had never even considered that negotiation was an option. She assumed that an international organization would have established transparent scales and grades. "I had no reference point to know where I fit in."

Another cultural constraint that shaped Anita's inaction concerned her attitude toward negotiation itself. Prior to the course, she equated negotiation to begging and conflict and found the idea to be distasteful:

*I hated the whole idea of negotiating. If these people thought enough of me to want to hire me, then they should also see what I'm worth. Asking for something is like polite begging. If I'm entitled to it, then I should be getting it. I always thought of negotiation as confrontation. I do anything to avoid a confrontation.*

Anita's expectations of salary-setting were not faulty in her own cultural context, but they were sorely out-of-context in her Center. Until she understood the rules of the context she was in (her Center's employment practices) and understood the concepts and assumptions that legitimized those rules, she would continue to have great difficulty negotiating for an appropriate salary. Even understanding the situation, it was difficult for Anita to act because the new behaviors violated values core to her identity.

*It is a psychological barrier. I just couldn't tell somebody that I'm worth this much because of this and this reason. But certainly, after the course, I'm much more objective about these things.*

Internal faulty reasoning processes are also evident in the practice of self-isolation. The story of Ana (detailed in Leadership Story 3) is similar to Harriet's "fierce fights" with her boss, in terms of the dynamic of social isolation and the thought process that sustains it. This thought process rationalizes isolation by dismissing the relationship

dimensions of work and elevating technical dimensions. Reflecting on her mindset in the early years at her Center, Harriet said:

*I didn't care about people not liking me. I didn't realize it was important for people to at least think that I was nice – whatever I might truly be – and that people's positive attitude toward me would then lead to other positive behavior in the organization.*

The internal thought process underlying the practice of mismanaging negative emotions has been discussed at length in the literature on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998) and conversational skills (Ellinor and Gerard, 1998). These discussions indicate that, when faced with stressful situations that give rise to emotions such as fear or anger, we tend to adopt a fight/flight mode, leading to defensive or offensive and inappropriate actions based on negative judgments and unexplored assumptions.

Josephine's story illustrates the faulty thinking process associated with poor emotional management: absence of rational or strategic thought can lead to making and acting on automatic negative judgments. She describes what her pre-WLS reaction would have been when faced with a situation in which someone had taken an action contrary to a prior agreement:

*I could be emotional and feel the person didn't respect me. In the past, whenever I faced something like that, I would just respond immediately with very strong sentiment, which sometimes would not help.*

With differing degrees of intensity, the constrained leaders felt a sense of urgency to find solutions to their relational problems. For instance, Harriett explained that shortly before she took the WLS course, she received a letter from her Center informing her that if she did not produce three research papers within three months, her employment would be terminated. Ana (Leadership Story 3) and Sally (Leadership Story 4) faced relational challenges that did not pose immediate threats but had long-term implications for their job effectiveness. The WLS Leadership and Negotiations courses provided insight into the relational challenges of constrained leaders.

## Impact of WLS courses

The study found all the constrained leaders had significant breakthroughs in learning because they acquired knowledge and skills. The constrained leaders' stories about the ultimate impact of their WLS courses vividly demonstrate the power of theory and ideas in producing self awareness, altering perception and faulty reasoning, and providing models that enable strategic action. Constrained leaders who previously dealt with inaction, isolation and mismanagement of negative emotions experienced significant change.

As discussed, inaction often results from lack of knowledge of the rules at play in a particular situation and the ineffective application of out-of-context rules. Inaction can also be caused by fear of engaging in behaviors that appear inappropriate from the perspective of the out-of-context rules in use. Anita felt unable to act effectively in her salary negotiation for both of the above reasons.

The Negotiation Course shed light on the norms and rules implicitly at play in her failed negotiation experiences. More importantly, the systematic presentation of this information made the process seem more objective by providing her with an understanding of the principles and skills of effective negotiation. This enabled her to overcome the psychological barrier that had prevented her from negotiating her salary effectively and, at the same time, gave her practice with the skills she would need for effective negotiation of any kind. In describing the change in the way she thought of her salary negotiation after the WLS course, she said:

*I had this idea of negotiation as confrontation. I wanted to say, “Look, I’m not getting what I’m worth.” But, I didn’t have the language. I didn’t know how to say, “I’m worth this much so what are you going to do about it? What do you have to offer?” I didn’t think of putting the question that way. Now I know.*

Ana (Leadership Story 3) is an example of a constrained leader who isolated herself from her team. Prior to the WLS, she was impatient with team members’ lack of initiative and elected to do the technical work herself because she felt it would get done faster and better. Her actions generated resentment among her team members, but she reasoned that their reactions did not matter – what mattered was that the work was of high quality. She found herself doing more and more of the technical work and withdrawing from the mounting tensions with her team. Although she cared about her team members, she did not know how to motivate them and build a high performing team.

In the Leadership Course, when Ana was presented with a theoretical model showing the stages of group development in the course, she could see the source of her problems: she was focusing on the team’s task needs while ignoring its socio-emotional needs. Her rationalization that the technical work was more important than the people who do the work was deeply flawed and limiting as a leader. She recognized that her role as the team leader was to find ways of motivating people to contribute their knowledge and skills to achieve team goals. The group development model provided a framework for Ana to think about how to address the socio-emotional needs of team members so they would be equipped and motivated to excel in their work.

The WLS gave Sally (Leadership Story 4), a constrained leader, powerful insights into how to engage key constituents from whom she had been isolated. Her isolation differed from Ana’s because it resulted from others’ actions, not her own.



Sally’s pre-WLS leadership story had to do with overcoming isolation as the leader of a new system-wide initiative. Despite her best efforts to interest and engage key decision-makers in the activities of her initiative, only a handful responded enthusiastically and indicated an interest in working with her. A second group of constituents responded negatively and a sizeable third group was simply silent, with a wait-and-see attitude. During the WLS course, she was presented with a tripartite model that characterized these three groups. The model proposed that in any change effort, constituents can be found in one of three categories: allies, opponents and fence-sitters. This model set off a light bulb in Sally’s head and led to lengthy discussions with workshop participants who helped her not only think through her problem, but also formulate some initial



strategies for dealing with individuals in each group with the goal of ultimately engaging them in the activities of her project.

Theory and ideas also had a profound impact on constrained leaders who had difficulty managing negative emotions. When Harriet encountered stressful situations, her reaction damaged her relationships with some colleagues as well as with members of her team. The WLS Leadership Course introduced her to the theory of personality differences and she took the Myers Briggs personality test. This new knowledge of her personality type and, more importantly, discussions about personality differences gave her powerful insight into her difficulties with relationships. Coincidentally, a colleague with whom she had had interpersonal difficulties happened to be a participant in the same WLS course. Harriett had been critical of this colleague's work and, not surprisingly, her colleague had not responded well. When she and her colleague discussed their personality profiles, Harriet not only had insights into why her colleague did things as she did, but also into why she had reacted as she had. Harriet observed that the most significant thing she learned was that others were not like her and that there were several legitimate ways of going about things.

### Practices of enabled leadership

The post-WLS leadership practices of constrained leaders differ markedly from those they had before the WLS because they put new resources to good use. Enabled leadership was demonstrated by a greater understanding, recognition and handling of previously neglected demands. For example, constrained leaders who had engaged in inaction learned to recognize the thought process that inhibited their effectiveness and to recognize the presence of a new rule set. This allowed them to understand the meaning of others' actions as well as the expected, appropriate responses in the context of their Centers.

Karen, like Anita, had engaged in inaction during a salary negotiation prior to the WLS course and similar thought processes seem to have contributed to the inaction of both women. Karen did not understand the norms and rules for negotiation in her Center, did not feel comfortable negotiating and was willing to accept her employer's reasons for offering her a low salary rather than raise her concerns.

After the Negotiation Course, she grasped the principles and skills required for effective negotiation and, more importantly, she recognized how her own thought processes had gotten in the way.<sup>13</sup> In a story of a recent negotiation with members of an agency representing an East African government, Karen demonstrated how recognizing and managing her previously unhelpful thought processes had enabled her to make use of the negotiation skills she had acquired in the WLS course.

Her new mindset prevented her from being "worn down" as she had been in her salary negotiation. The governmental negotiation went on for ten months.

*We wrote a proposal for the World Bank to apply this (method) in (country). We had a lot of meetings, describing to people what this was all about and why it was such a good way of farming. One of the reasons the negotiations just kept going on is that I would not let them have me, if you will. I just kept saying, "This is what we are proposing,*

<sup>13</sup> See Kolb (2003) for a discussion of how women tend to get in the way of their own negotiating effectiveness.



*and this is what we can do and this is what it will cost.” I really had to hang in there and be tough. At one point, I had to say, “If that’s not going to work out, then fine. That’s really too bad we won’t be able to do this together.” A couple of my colleagues were alarmed. They thought, “Oh, you can’t do that.” And I thought, “Well, I can, because this is a negotiation, and they are trying to get us to do too much for too little and we’re not going to go there.” They didn’t wear me down.*

Maintaining her stamina and seeing the negotiation through involved using many of the ideas and skills Karen had acquired from the training as well as the confidence:

*The confidence to realize you are in a negotiation, you are in a powerful position and you don’t have to be a pushover. That was important. It’s also about being a more effective communicator, knowing when you need to get on the phone, and understanding what you can and cannot achieve through email. Whenever I was in a negotiation, I used to think I had to keep coming up with new reasons all the time to support my case or argument. And one of the things I’ve learned is you’ve got three or two or even one good argument. Repeating those reasons over and over again can be a good tactic to prove your point. I can’t overemphasize how much these courses have taught me. I came out each time just going “Wow.” It’s been a real learning process, always challenging.*

Recognition was also important for constrained leaders who had engaged in self-isolation and discounted the critical role of relationships. After the course, they made a concerted effort to repair damaged relationships, foster collegiality and cultivate positive team interactions. For other constrained leaders who recognized the importance of relationships but had been unable to build relationships with some constituents, the course provided new ways of thinking about how to engage constituents and strategic ways of building connections.

Sally’s efforts to engage key constituents in her system-wide project had met with some enthusiasm but most reacted negatively or not at all. After the WLS course, she used the tripartite framework from the WLS course to engage her allies directly and her opponents and fence-sitters indirectly. In particular, she made a concerted effort to work closely with her allies on projects in which she could lend her expertise and the resources of her unit.

These projects were very successful and when she publicized them, it attracted the attention of fence-sitters, who began to respond to her invitations. These lead to more successful achievements which she continued to publicize. The growing successes of her collaborations led some who had been staunch opponents to start working with her – with caution initially but ultimately with enthusiasm.

## Ana: A Story of Constrained Leadership

### Building Positive Relationships in a Team

Ana, national staff at her Center, saw herself as a “somewhat effective” leader prior to the WLS course – good in getting things done and achieving results, but not effective in managing relationships with members of her team. However, after the course, she said she was “very effective” as a leader. To understand the change, it is important to get a sense of her experiences before the WLS course.

*I worked on developing training materials with my team. I was under a lot of pressure. Members on the team would not get their parts done on time, I would get frustrated and do it myself. For me, it was: let's get it done, on time, with the highest quality. But I was not giving team relationships the value they needed.*

She worked fast, focusing on the technical task, expecting others to do the same. She did not want to spend time making sure that her team members knew what they had to do; she expected them to simply take off and focus on the task. Her work style created pressure and stress and led to tension between her and members of her team. She was aware of the tension, but neither understood the source nor what to do about it. So, she simply focused on the task because she felt so much pressure to meet deadlines.

### Finding some answers

The Leadership Course “helped me find the answers, and gave me ‘hints’ of the desired behaviors.” She learned her behavior was damaging the team. “I wasn’t being sensitive, I was pushing them too hard and leaving them behind.” This motivated her to change her behavior. “It’s better to slow down a bit, to move with your team.”

Two exercises gave her particularly important insight into “what was missing” in her team leadership skills set. The first was a theoretical framework articulating the leader’s role in cultivating high performing teams.

*We studied how to create an effective team with a diagram of 12 different things that make a team effective. I could see I was paying too much attention and giving too much priority to some issues while ignoring other equally important matters, like relationships and learning to be an effective team player. So it's a matter of playing the right role at the right time. And then people can follow you. It's really not that difficult.*

Beyond the theoretical input, however, it was the team exercise that gave her concrete examples of team interdependence.

*In one exercise where I had to be the leader, we had to cross an imaginary bridge and if we were not together, we would fall and die. I was aware that I had to take care of everyone. I decided to be in the middle of the group. I was blindfolded, listening to the ones in the front, the ones in the back and the ones on the sides, and asking people to pay attention so we could coordinate. It showed that if you are the leader, you have to listen to everybody and decide, on the basis of information that's provided by the team members, when to move. That was a good lesson.*

*In another exercise, I could see, but I was mute. My leader was blind, but she could ask for input from other people. I could see and I could just move my hands to tell her yes or no, but I could only pass that information. I had to be very creative. It was a strain. But I could see it was an opportunity for all the people to perform their duties well. The lesson was: play your role without playing other peoples' roles, because then you take away their opportunity to do their best.*

### Turning an enemy into a friend

When she returned to her office, she repaired damaged relationships with colleagues and teammates. More importantly, she changed how she interacted with people on her team and in interpersonal relationships.

*First, I slowed down. I became very aware of the intensity of my behavior – watching every word I said, the tone of my voice, reading peoples' reactions, and asking more questions rather than giving instructions, and then we would negotiate. I concentrated on making people feel comfortable and good about what they were doing and about working for me.*

## LEADERSHIP STORY 4

### Sally: A Story of Constrained Leadership

#### Building Support for a System-wide Initiative

Sally was keenly aware of the leadership challenges she faced in her job. During her WLS course, she was eager to acquire tools that would help her meet her most significant challenge – engaging the interest and cooperation of her constituents, the key decision-makers in the CGIAR Centers, in the activities of the system-wide initiative she was leading.

Her small program "was charged with working with everybody." A few constituents were supportive of her efforts and expressed interest in working with her. However, the majority did not see it as useful or relevant, "Not worth putting the time." While some expressed these feelings in a very open and hostile manner, most were simply silent. It was this latter group that most frustrated her.

*You're sitting in an office, communicating with people all over the world, but certain pockets just never respond. You're getting a flurry of correspondence and feedback, positive and negative and everything in between from others, which is great, because they care. But when you're getting dead silence, that's what failure feels like.*

While she was clear about her challenges, she was unsure of how to handle the resistance from senior management. The insight came when, during the course, she was introduced to a tripartite framework of allies, opponents and fence-sitters. "The light bulb went off. I could immediately picture which leaders went into each of those three categories."

This realization helped her frame the challenge of engaging her constituents and this, in turn, enabled her to think through and develop strategies for handling the challenge she faced in building support and involvement.

*The course gave me some tools and models for thinking through who my allies were, who was sitting on the fence, who my opponents were, and how much time and effort I should be putting into those three groups. You can just bang your head against the wall and focus all your time and efforts on your opponents. You want them on board and it's painful when people aren't on board, but ... I thought, okay, I'm going to make sure they get a flood of information on a regular basis, but I'm going to have results and accomplishments by working with my allies. And then we'll share the successes visibly, we'll create a positive momentum, a positive epidemic. It was in the Leadership Course that I was able to think that through and come out feeling more confident that focusing on where the door was open was a good thing.*

Giving each group what it was ready for, she explained, "wasn't taking the easy way out – it really was the right thing to do." This meant meeting people where they were and giving them what they needed to engage them more fully in her efforts. Not only did she become more focused in how she approached each group, she began to create services with tangible outputs based on her experience with the Centers that had worked with her initially.

She also increased focus on communication. All constituents were informed of the activities of her office and made aware of the services that were available. She began to share stories about successes in other Centers but she also provided data-driven information and facts about trends and challenges the system experienced. These served to frame an understanding of areas that had implications for the Centers' performance and effectiveness.

This strategy proved effective. As one senior leader told her, he had initially been an opponent but "I've been amazed at your ability to push us to progress, and you've done it in such a way that we feel like we've become good friends on the journey."

# Transforming intuitive leaders into strategic leaders

Intuitive leaders exercise effective leadership in a wide variety of situations but they are neither conscious of their practices nor understanding of why they prove to be effective. The practices of intuitive leaders arise from internal sources, particularly personal values. For intuitive leaders, knowledge acquisition and skill development provide the avenue for leadership development. Knowledge of theoretical concepts and models can give intuitive leaders an explicit understanding and grasp of previously tacit practice. It also opens a menu of other possible ways of thinking and acting. Skill development exercises contribute to a refinement of practice.

## The transformation process

The impact of the WLS on intuitive leaders' subsequent exercise of leadership has been demonstrated by a subtle but qualitatively significant shift, manifest in the adoption of a strategic posture. Strategic leadership is differentiated from intuitive leadership by the use of knowledge and the deliberate and learned application of skill as opposed to unconscious and tacit use of talents.

Intuitive leaders came to the WLS course with the belief that they were capable of effecting change. This is in sharp contrast to hidden leaders whose leadership effectiveness is limited by the belief that they cannot effect change or from constrained leaders whose effectiveness comes from technical skills alone. Unlike constrained leaders, intuitive leaders demonstrate skillful attention to both the relational and technical demands of a situation. Intuitive leaders have the ability to motivate others to work with them in solving problems they identify.

## Practices of intuitive leadership

Intuitive leaders employ a wide range of practices, exhibiting a skillful balance in managing relationship building and technical demands. For instance, Eleanor successfully advocated for change in her organization's spousal health insurance benefit policy but she had to be "very diplomatic and do a lot of groundwork in order to be effective".

Eleanor discovered that her national staff male colleagues had health insurance coverage for their wives, but female national staff did not have coverage for their husbands. She saw this as a big injustice. "I revealed it, I talked about it and I managed to have it changed in the staff policy." She talked to the human resources office because, as she put it "they had the real data." She also checked with her colleagues. Because she had good relations with both the HR staff and her colleagues, she said "no one felt I was meddling where I shouldn't be meddling."

She then approached her supervisor and told him what her investigation had revealed. In addition to making data-based arguments, she also made normative arguments for why the policy should change. Although she had an immediate personal stake in the outcome, she was careful not to put her personal interests in the foreground. Instead, she expressed her concerns about gender equity in the workplace.

*Things have changed in the workplace, and perhaps this has been overlooked. I was perhaps the only one in the institution at this time who could see it, because it affected me directly. But, it would be in the interest of all of the institution to correct. It's time that there's more equal treatment of females and males in the working environment, and it would be nice if this would be changed.*

Her supervisor “was a little bit surprised” but she believes that he brought up the issue in a management team meeting. After a few months, the changes she had advocated were incorporated into HR policy.

Alexandra, also an intuitive leader, has innate skill in fostering collaboration and the ability to balance relational and technical needs. The following pre-WLS story illustrates the collaborative way she worked with various stakeholders to develop a Web site to showcase her Center's research.

*I went to see each project manager and I said our Center has 15 projects and each project is doing a different kind of research. Our idea was to have a Web site where each of these 15 projects would have its own space. Then, I went to see each of the project leaders and said, “Look, we know that you would like to have a Web site, we are working on this, we want to help you. I know you are the project leader, you are very busy, you will not have time to sit with me for hours and look at which content will go in your site. So, I suggest you decide who on your team would be most suitable to do this with me.*

*So I generally started to work with a secretary or project assistant or researcher who was ITenthusiastic or interested in Web stuff. I gave them the choice and this is what really worked well, because they were happy not to be obliged to do it themselves. Some of them were a little bit surprised, thinking “my secretary will not be able to do it,” and I told them, “I think she will.” This way, I motivated people who wanted to learn something new.*

Alexandra and Eleanor exhibited leadership skills by engaging and motivating others to cooperate with them in accomplishing a variety of goals – a key ingredient in leadership effectiveness. The practices they employed were multifaceted. Eleanor used diplomacy to maintain positive engagement with key decision-makers and she sought to persuade by using facts and making effective normative arguments. Alexandra cultivated mutuality in working with the various research project representatives. May (Leadership Story 5), an intuitive leader trying to handle a contentious situation, used “respectful but firm” engagement to defend her research approach. Elizabeth (Leadership Story 6) employed this stance as well to maintain her ethical standards in dealing with a researcher who became abusive when she refused to comply with a problematic request.

Each of these women maintained the respect of her bosses, peers and subordinates by building relationships but also by demonstrating technical ability. Eleanor backed up what she said with data, Alexandra provided the type of technical support that enabled the teams to implement their visions, May provided evidence of the value of her team's research approach. This balance of appropriate relationship-building practices and technical backing made them able to engage, motivate and get the best out of colleagues in the situations they described.<sup>14</sup>



Ironically, while both relational and technical competence achieved positive results, they were not always appropriately valued or rewarded. This was the case, for instance, for the relational competence of fostering collaboration. Despite the success of Alexandra and her unit in working collaboratively, she felt that neither she nor her unit were recognized or appreciated. She observed that projects and people who gained visibility and rewards had two characteristics neither of which she nor her unit's boss possessed. First, rewarded projects were those which champions claimed independent responsibility for success.<sup>15</sup> The attribution of success is more diffuse in a collaborative effort where results come from the effort and interaction of all involved parties. Second, the politics necessary for promoting independent achievements was something that neither she nor her boss were motivated to do, although they recognized there were costs of not doing so.

A similar irony exists in the area of task competence. Despite producing high quality research, May (Leadership Story 5) and her colleagues came under intense scrutiny and pressure because they employed innovative research methods and practices. They and their work were viewed with great suspicion; they had to defend their research methods continuously and to work at maintaining cohesion as a team in order to resist external pressure.

### Source of intuitive leadership practices

In general, intuitive leaders believe in the values of their practices. They act to accomplish goals but also because they feel it is the right thing to do. As a result, because their actions are value driven, they are often unwilling to alter practices even when doing so might gain them more recognition.

Alexandra recognized that visibility, recognition and rewards required playing the game of "independent contributor, not collaborator." Still, she was not motivated to do what the organization valued. She was motivated by her internal values of providing service through collaboration, fun and enjoyment in work, and maintaining work-life balance.

*I can't be very aggressive because I have three kids and I have to balance my work and my family. When you are aggressive, it takes all of your energy and I can't do it. I need to have energy when I come home.*

All the intuitive leaders expressed personal values as a key motivating factor in their practices. Eleanor was motivated to advocate for maternity leave and equal treatment of male and female staff in the provision of spousal health insurance because she felt that people should be treated in an equitable manner. Elizabeth risked her job to resist a researcher who she felt was asking her to do something unethical. May was

<sup>14</sup> See Fletcher (1999) for a discussion and description of the notion of relational practice.

<sup>15</sup> See Fletcher (1999) for a detailed analysis of how a culture of individualism effects the skills required to foster collaboration and accomplish complex organizational goals.



determined to defend her team's research approach because of her commitment to maintaining a diversity of perspectives in the research process.

## Impact of the WLS course

For intuitive leaders, the WLS courses did not need to fill leadership gaps as it did for constrained leaders. But, the knowledge and skill development exercises – refinement of practice, affirmation of values and linking of current practice to theory – still had impact.

### Refining of practice

Some intuitive leaders worked on refinement in very specific skill areas such as managing conflict. Others, such as Eleanor, indicated that the course enabled them to refine their practice in a wide range of areas.

*You develop greater awareness. Then you think it over and you can adjust certain things that you simply can do better for yourself or for people around you.*

### Affirmation of values

Others said that the course affirmed their values and strengthened their commitment and resolve to live by them despite the challenges. The value put on independent accomplishment in Alexandra's Center made her question her preferred collaborative approach, but the WLS course gave her assurance that her style was a strength and affirmed her commitment to collaboration.

*The course confirmed that what I did intuitively before the course – there were a lot of good things in there. Before, I saw it as a weakness. Now I have it very clearly in my mind that it's a strength, that I have this emotional intelligence. A lot of people are emotionally intelligent but they are chaotic. I am not at all chaotic; I like to make concrete plans. People are happy with me because I get things done but in a nice way. Realizing this helped me strengthen my style, rather than see it as a weakness or as something that is not compatible.*

### Linking current practice to theory

Intuitive leaders can refine their leadership practices or become more systematic in how they enact them when they have better understanding of leadership concepts and develop skills. Eleanor often became impatient when she perceived behaviors that led her to conclude that someone was insecure. She tended to be very direct which often ruffled feathers and made her less effective than she would have liked in those relationships. Now, when she finds herself becoming impatient, she is able to catch herself and consciously think about what is going on with her as well as reflect on what she learned from the course that could help her manage her response better. "At first, practicing this conscious reflection felt unnatural but then the new behaviors became internalized – and habitual."

### Practices of strategic leadership

As mentioned above, the affirmation of values was another impact of the WLS course. Despite Alexandra's resolve to maintain her collaborative style, the reality of



not being appreciated for contributions is difficult. She had no solutions for dealing with individuals and units that subscribed to the model of “independent” accomplishment and competition. Still, she and her unit found ways of maintaining commitment and enjoyment in their work by seeking out a community of like-minded people within and outside of her organization.

## LEADERSHIP STORY 5

### May: A Story of Intuitive Leadership

#### Defending a Bottom-Up Approach to Research

May, an international staff member, has worked with her Center in several capacities, most recently as a theme leader. May saw herself as a “very effective” leader prior to the WLS Leadership Course, particularly good at handling difficult people, planning research autonomously and working effectively in multicultural and multidisciplinary teams. These skills served her well in exercising leadership as a researcher and theme leader.

She found the WLS course to be useful in many respects, especially because it reinforced her commitment to diversity.

*For years, I've felt that there was a huge value in diversity, but in the course they did some team exercises that revealed evidence of the added value of incorporating diversity. That reinforced my existing feelings and also gave me some concrete evidence that I could present to other people when I was arguing for our very inclusive approach.*

This “inclusive approach” was characterized by different philosophy and research practices than those predominant at her Center. “We explicitly were trying to be bottom up, to prioritize the activities of the field people.” Her supervisor was open to this approach. He had an explicit philosophy to have a non-hierarchical structure, but on the other hand, he was autocratic.

*We came up with this model of not being hierarchical, but it was all new and strange and they had to think if they really wanted to do that or not.. Our approach involved taking some risks. You don't have the control, at least perceived control, which you have in a very top-down approach. We didn't have a controlled experiment, and we had a lot of discussions around that. They never really complained about the idea of being bottom-up. In a way, it's like motherhood and apple pie – you can't really say that you shouldn't be bottom-up.*

This ambivalence towards a non-hierarchical approach was expressed in one research project when May's team put together a steering committee composed of international experts. The experts were to provide the research team with intellectual critique and feedback. Her supervisor learned about this idea, and he was concerned. May speculated that he thought the steering committee was there to just say “Oh yes, that's wonderful,” which was not her intent. Still, her supervisor asked a friend to “keep an eye on us, pressure us, and keep asking difficult questions. He was worried about our rigor.” However, this “observer” was also a team member on one of May's research sites who understood and supported the methodology used by the research team. As a result, he ended up playing a different role than the one her supervisor probably intended.

Ultimately, May's supervisor "came around" because of the support of the observer but, most importantly, because of the persistence of the group and May's firm but respectful engagement with her supervisor in support of their methodology. Not only did the team continue to produce positive results, the group itself was coherent and capable of defending its approach, thanks in part to the insights May had gleaned from the Leadership Course.

*Because he had the power, he could ask me to defend this approach over and over again. And he did. And I did. I had to justify it repeatedly with our leaders and with the board of trustees. We were using participatory action research which was very alien in the institute at that time. Now everybody is doing it, but when we started, we were the first ones and we really had to do a lot of convincing. The course gave me tips and tools that helped me make those arguments. We had a good plan. We had thought it through very clearly, we presented it to him on demand, and we convinced him.*

## LEADERSHIP STORY 6

### Elizabeth: A Story of Intuitive Leadership

#### Learning to Be More Effective Without Authority

Elizabeth, a national staff member, describes herself as someone with ability to get things done and, thus, she is often expected to perform tasks for which she lacks authority, "I don't have all the resources, I might not have all the authority I need, but I still make sure I get things done."

Despite her apparent effectiveness, Elizabeth felt she was only "somewhat effective" as a leader and that if she had greater authority, she would be able to accomplish goals with greater ease. She talked to her supervisor about a promotion, explained that her responsibility requires more authority, but he simply said that there was no money for an upgraded position.

*I see it as a problem. They may not see it as a problem because, no matter what I am asked to do, I will go all the way out and get it done. I find my way of getting resources and get things done for the Center. They don't know what I go through.*

While the Leadership Course did not help her address the issue of her proper grading, Elizabeth felt it helped her refine her leadership skills in order to be more effective in influencing others without having authority. For example, one aspect of her job was procurement of equipment. When a scientist asked her to order some items for research without passing through the normal purchasing unit channel, she told him it could not be done. "He wanted me to give the money in cash to people to go and buy things. And I said, 'No, I will not do that. We still have to go by the rules.' We were investing a lot of money. I didn't want to jeopardize our funds and our name just because he wanted some people to buy things for him." He was furious, called her names and tried to have her fired. Her boss, however, supported her decision and she maintained her job.

She was effective in protecting the interests of the Center and maintaining her own high ethical standards, but after the WLS course, she recognized she could have handled it in

a way that would have created less stress for her and others. Had she been graded as a manager or administrator, she reasoned, the scientist may not have agreed with her, but he would have accepted her decision. Instead, because she lacked the authority, he viewed it as license to pressure her by being disrespectful. Despite the abuse, she said, "I held my ground, didn't say anything. I just made sure I did my job to the best of my ability as much as I am allowed to."

In the WLS course, she gained greater self-awareness. She saw things about herself that she was not aware of, but mostly, the course affirmed what she knew about herself and helped her envision ways of refining her leadership skill.

*My leadership strength lies in the fact that I am able to apply different skills in different situations. Whatever the situation demands is what I apply. I apply authority when it is necessary and I apply my social power when it is necessary, especially when it comes to getting things done.*

Despite her intuitive ability, she learned that her leadership style could improve through some refinement. She learned she could be more cooperative. When asked how this applied to the situation of the scientist, she said that while she would still not cooperate with him in "defrauding" the organization, she would be less stern in how she communicated her position.

*I might just want to make him realize where he is going wrong, and let him know my stand – that even though you want to do it this way, I am not supportive of this. I would advise him on the best way to make sure what he does is right.*

The realization that a softer response is a better way to deal with a stressful situation has affected her practice in other areas. She now finds herself wanting to listen more to the other person's side of the story.

*We see where we can come to midpoint, where our opinions might meet. Then we can find ways of doing things properly, without going against organizational policy, and achieve the same end.*

While this change in perspective and skill has been helpful to her in influencing without authority, she still feels she is asked to do things for which she lacks authority. Changing this situation is a challenge she still faces.



# Conclusion and implications

This study explored whether and, if so, how the CGIAR Women's Leadership Series has impacted women's leadership development in the CGIAR. Its conceptual framework went beyond identifying training impacts in order to offer insight on how training impacts alter leadership practices. This framework of "types of leadership transformations" was illustrated with rich descriptive information representing the leadership experiences of WLS alumnae.



## Did the WLS have a positive impact?

In exploring the impact of the WLS on women's leadership development within the CGIAR, this report found that the WLS has exceeded one of its original intentions of helping women strengthen their leadership skills. The WLS courses have catalyzed significant transformations in women's leadership development through improving skills and knowledge, heightened self-awareness and perspective change.

WLS participants entered the training setting as hidden leaders, constrained leaders or intuitive leaders. While most individuals told leadership stories that could be categorized into more than one of these leadership categories, they were placed in one category to capture the nature of the leadership dilemma that was most salient for them at the time of the training. The most important lessons from the WLS related to these salient leadership problems. After the course, they described practices that suggested hidden leaders had become visible leaders, constrained leaders had become enabled leaders and intuitive leaders had become strategic leaders. These transformations have become evident in the new leadership behaviors participants have engaged in since the training, based on what they learned in their WLS course.

The Web-survey findings suggest that there may be other types of impacts not captured by the current study. While 96 percent of the interviewees said that overall, the WLS course had a "very positive" impact on their leadership development, 56.6 percent of Web-survey respondents indicated the course was "very positive," 39.5 percent indicated it was "somewhat positive," and 3.9 percent indicated it was neither positive nor negative. This suggests that the interviews probably reflect the experiences of the 56.6 percent who rated the WLS as having a "very positive" impact.

The difference in the responses of Web-survey and interview respondents raises questions about what types of impacts have not been captured in this study. There are at least three possibilities to consider.

First, it is reasonable to assume that the impacts identified in this report represent the experiences of some WLS alums who responded to the Web survey and the interview.

In particular, the interviews give us a detailed account of three pre-WLS leadership types and the key training outcomes of the WLS that proved to be transformative for each type of leader.

Another possibility, suggested by Velsor (1998), is that a small percentage of WLS alumnae fit the category of those who do not benefit from training because they are unreceptive and resistant to new information and training activities. Indeed, the one interview that was not included in the data analysis exhibited some of the characteristics that might be expected from individuals who might be classified under this category of impact. Finally, it is also plausible that there may be other leadership impacts that are currently unknown.

**TABLE 4** Building on the momentum: possible leverage points

LEVERAGE POINTS	INDIVIDUAL LEVERAGE POINTS	ORGANIZATIONAL LEVERAGE POINTS
<b>Hidden Leaders</b>		
Thought process: From self-limiting to self-empowering	Trainee catches herself engaging in self-limiting talk and alters thought process	INTERPERSONAL: Cultivate supportive interpersonal relationships in which self-empowering talk is encouraged TEAM: Cultivate a team culture of positive personal agency
Practices of visibility	Trainee tries new behaviors that mitigate hiding	TEAM: Provide opportunities for individuals to gain recognition TEAM: Provide opportunities for working on challenging and visible assignments
Hierarchical arrangements and practices	Trainee strategically communicates how some hierarchical arrangements inhibit effective leadership	ORGANIZATIONAL AND TEAM: Understand how hierarchy fosters hiding of knowledge Explore practices within hierarchical relationships that make visible leadership possible
Cultural norms and practices	Trainee thinks critically to understand how cultural practices of her organization inhibit visible leadership on her part	ORGANIZATIONAL AND TEAM: Explore how gender stereotypes shape work norms and behavior in ways that suppress hidden knowledge Explore practices and relationships that make visible leadership possible
<b>Constrained Leaders</b>		
Thought process: From out-of-context to in-context reasoning	Trainee seeks out cultural insiders who can shed light on rules of context Trainee develops ability to understand cultural differences	INTERPERSONAL: Cultural insiders provide guidance and mentoring on context-appropriate rules
Thought process: From dismissing relationships to recognition of importance of relationship	Trainee catches herself in process of dismissing relationships Trainee challenges and redefines faulty premise	TEAM: Development of norms that foster positive interpersonal relationships and interdependence
Thought process: From automatic judgment to suspending judgment	Trainee catches herself making negative judgment	TEAM: Development of norms that foster positive emotional expression
Practices that balance relationship and task	Trainee tries new behaviors that involve managing relationships	ORGANIZATIONAL: Develop rewards and recognition for team building, mentoring, etc.
<b>Intuitive Leaders</b>		
Identify areas requiring refinement	Trainee seeks opportunities for continuous learning and development	ORGANIZATIONAL: Provide opportunities for continuous learning and refinement

### Organizational points of leverage

Despite the possibility that the study may not capture *all* the impacts of the WLS, the findings described in this report offer valuable insight that raise the more important question of how these positive changes can be sustained and built upon. The post-WLS leadership practices described above show how these impacts have been sustained by the actions of the individual trainees themselves. Their leadership stories also show a variety of structural and cultural aspects of the organization that can be critical leverage points for supporting the continued leadership development of women.

Looking at ways to build on the momentum begun by the WLS, Table 4 identifies several leverage points. The first column identifies the leverage points for the three leader types, the second identifies how these leverage points can be developed by the trainee to sustain leadership development and the third column pertains to the organizational-level leverage points. Leadership in organizations is enacted on several levels. Thus, in addition to the largest level of “organization”, the third column also takes into account the “interpersonal” contexts of leadership as well as the “team context”.

The leverage points for individual trainees were identified on the basis of the changes in practice described by the WLS participants in all three transformation categories. The organizational leverage points, however, are not based on evidence. They represent possible settings within the organization that have potential to create contexts for continued leadership development.

Generally, the organizational leverage points identified in Table 4 suggest that hidden leaders might benefit most, but not exclusively, from mentors who can provide daily feedback, support and encouragement to stay visible. Constrained leaders may also benefit from mentoring but, for them, the focus is on relational skill development. Intuitive leaders may benefit most from exposure to theoretical ideas that help them become more systematic in how they apply leadership. All the women could benefit from efforts to cultivate an equitable organizational culture.

### Some pedagogical implications

This research also found that leadership development means different things to different people. The conceptual framework developed specifically for this research gives us a more refined lens for viewing women’s leadership development than currently exists in the literature. Specifically, our framework focuses on the differences among types of women leaders as well as the types of transformations they can undergo through formal training. The literature on women’s leadership development does not make this distinction and, in fact, implicitly views women trainees as a homogeneous group. The leverage points identified in Table 4 indicate that sustaining leadership growth when participants return to their organizations after their WLS courses requires a differentiated strategy for fostering and maintaining leadership development.

The literature on women in organizations overwhelmingly focuses on women leaders who have reached the highest levels in their organizational hierarchy. However, by looking at leadership as a role and not a position, this study has explored leadership experiences at all levels of the organization as well as for different leadership types. This challenges the assumption that equates upward mobility to leadership effectiveness. Instead, it recognizes the fact that an individual’s actual experience of leading

needs to be examined to identify leadership development needs. It is through this analysis that the appropriate developmental opportunities and leverage points can be identified.

The framework also raises some interesting questions concerning new directions or refinements of training practices that will cultivate women's leadership development in the training setting:

- If invisible, constrained and intuitive leaders participate in training together, what are the implications for the types of content they each need?
- Beyond content, how can trainers utilize participants' interactions to maximize learning and leadership development?

The fact that the leadership types in the WLS are distributed across levels of hierarchy suggests that the WLS was correct in bringing women together from all the levels. The WLS participants helped and learned from each other in order to achieve the transformations described in this report. The present framework of leadership transformation can be used to guide those conversations to facilitate deeper learning breakthroughs.

### The limits of formal training

The current case shows that enabling women to create conditions that make it possible for them to exercise leadership more effectively is critical. Visible, constrained and intuitive leaders all acted in ways that enabled them to remove obstacles to leadership effectiveness through their own efforts. In doing so, they built effective teams, introduced innovative practices and methods, advocated for equitable policies, built collaborative relationships, built support for system-wide initiatives and much more. This suggests that the WLS course is doing more than just strengthening the leadership capacity of individual women. It raises the intriguing possibility that women themselves are taking initiatives and starting to change their workplaces into more women-friendly organizations.

While this is heartening, the findings also suggest that strengthening women's leadership capacity alone may not be sufficient. While the WLS courses have had positive impact on the development of women's leadership within the CGIAR, the leadership stories suggest that there are limits to formal training. As described above, both internal and external factors shape the practices of WLS alumni. While training can go a long way in leading to learning breakthroughs that can target internal factors, it cannot address external factors such as gender-based assumptions or assumptions based on recruitment category and hierarchy. These are all external or systemic factors that are part and parcel of the structure and culture of the organizations within which women work. This raises the intriguing question of what systemic change efforts may be necessary to achieve a transformation of organizational culture and practices so as to create the conditions in which the leadership potential of all its members, men and women, can be fully unleashed.



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## Syllabus for CGIAR Women's Leadership Course

**FACILITATED BY TRAINING RESOURCES GROUP (TRG)**

### Course Description

The CGIAR Women's Leadership Course is designed to reinforce the skills needed to enhance the leadership capacity and managerial effectiveness of women leaders, scientists and professionals who work in the CGIAR Centers and other international and national organizations. The major skill areas are: sustaining team performance, managing conflict and building alliances to achieve research and business results. Gender and its implications are woven throughout the course.

### Learning Objectives

The CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program (G&D), in collaboration with the Training Resources Group (TRG), has customized the curriculum of the course to the specific needs of its women leaders. It is preceded by a 360-degree evaluation of current management skills. At the end of this learning event, participants will be able to:

- use information gained from skill and style inventories to strengthen their leadership and managerial effectiveness;
- use essential communication skills, i.e., feedback and facilitation, to enhance their leadership effectiveness;
- build and sustain effective team performance;
- manage interpersonal conflict constructively;
- develop strategies to influence and build alliances;
- use an increased awareness and understanding of gender implications in their personal and professional development;
- draw increasingly upon their network of colleagues for personal and professional support, guidance and assistance;
- apply course skills, knowledge and tools to real work challenges.

### Course Topics

The topics covered during the seven-day course are:

- defining the difference between leading and managing;
- undertaking dialogue, facilitation, feedback and dealing with conflict;
- maximizing the diverse contributions of team members;
- using appropriate personal and organizational power and influence;
- developing and sustaining high team performance through leadership that supports team member behaviors.

## Syllabus for CGIAR Women's Negotiation Skills Course

**FACILITATED BY THE CENTER FOR GENDER IN ORGANIZATIONS (CGO)  
AT THE SIMMONS GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

### Course Description

Negotiation is a critical skill in the CGIAR – it is one of the ways the system works. When a woman fails to negotiate for what she needs to be successful, the potential for the accumulation of disadvantage magnifies. To be successful in these negotiations requires clarity about what can be negotiated. However, more goes on in a negotiation than the debate over terms of the agreement. While bargaining over issues, a parallel discussion – or *shadow negotiation* – is taking place simultaneously. Thus, the shadow negotiation is where relationships, perceptions of power and control, and hidden agendas are most likely to surface. Managing these shadow negotiations successfully requires a set of *strategic moves* that help the negotiator establish her place at the table, enlist the other party to work with her and deal with challenges that can potentially derail the negotiations. Working from case examples drawn from international NGOs and private sector companies, Deborah Kolb helps participants develop practical skills for managing the negotiations in ways that promote their interests and those of their organizations.

### Learning Objectives

The CGIAR Gender & Diversity Program (G&D), in collaboration with Simmons Graduate School of Management, has customized the curriculum of the Negotiation Course to the specific needs of CGIAR women leaders. It invites participants to:

- learn the fundamentals of different negotiation models (distributive and joint gain);
- understand the multiple ways gender plays out in the shadow negotiation;
- assess their bargaining strengths and weaknesses;
- learn strategies to position themselves as effective ‘woman’ negotiators;
- discover how skills of connection promote potential for collaboration and problem solving;
- use negotiation principles to build supporting coalitions;
- use feedback to reflect on their styles and how they fit in negotiations in their organizations.

### Course Topics

The topics covered during the three-day course are:

- distributive negotiations: creating value;
- gender issues in negotiation: the shadow negotiation;
- getting into a good position to negotiate;

- joint gains negotiation: creating value;
- connecting for problem solving;
- putting it all together: negotiating difficult situations;
- applying negotiation principles to coalition building.

## Methodology

### Research methodology and strategy

In order to investigate the impact of the WLS on development of women's leadership in the CGIAR, the goal of this research was to obtain rich descriptive information related to the leadership experiences of participants before the WLS, their experiences during the WLS course itself, and their leadership experiences after the course. This section describes the research methodology and the steps taken to assure necessary anonymity of interview participants.

#### Methodology

A qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate for capturing data that would reveal the practices of participants before and after their WLS course and also illuminate the contextual factors that gave rise to these practices. The fact that qualitative research is able to illuminate the inter-related subtleties of process and context makes it well suited for this type of study (Cresswell, 1998; Dey, 1993; Bogdan and Bilken, 1998).

#### Strategy

In addition to the qualitative methodology, this research also adopted a case study strategy. What defines an entity as a case is not its size but its integrity as a whole with definable boundaries within which a particular phenomenon takes place.<sup>16</sup> By carefully defining the boundaries of a case, the researcher can identify relevant information sources and proceed to seek information that offers in-depth insight into the research question.

The WLS draws a number of participants (22 percent) from CGIAR partner organizations but the WLS participants from within the CGIAR system were viewed as the appropriate case for the current study. Information obtained from members of partner organizations would not shed light on the impact of the WLS training on women's leadership development within the CGIAR.<sup>17</sup>

### Research design

In designing the research, the first decision was to determine the appropriate data collection techniques. Then it was necessary to determine the types of information needed to answer the research question and to develop a strategy for reaching the sources of the desired information.

#### Data collection techniques

In-depth interviews provided the primary means of collecting information to illuminate the impact of the WLS on women's leadership practice. A Web survey also was used, but since this technique of data collection would not yield the rich descriptive information needed for this study, it was primarily used as a means of gaining access

<sup>16</sup> A case can range in size from an individual to a group, organization, community, country or even a much larger multinational unit.

<sup>17</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this research, it is conceivable that the WLS impact on the non-CGIAR participants has been similar to its impact on those within the CGIAR.

to WLS alumnae. A more detailed account of the way in which the interview and Web survey were used is also described in this section.

### Information requirements

The primary information sources in this study were the WLS alumnae. The three broad information clusters requested from them were:

- pre-WLS leadership experiences;
- significant experiences during the WLS course;
- post-WLS leadership experiences.

Since the impact of leadership training can be subtle, the appreciation of its significance requires understanding the everyday character of leadership practice.

To capture the nuances of everyday action in context, leadership stories were elicited from interviewees in relation to questions from the three information clusters. Stories

TABLE 5 Information sought from alumnae, administrators and instructors

INFORMATION CATEGORIES	DESCRIPTION OF INFORMATION SOUGHT
<b>Information Source: Alumnae</b>	
General information	Employment information: years employed in CGIAR, nationality, Center, position, recruitment category, etc.
Pre-WLS leadership experiences	Self-evaluation of leadership skills on a five-point scale. Explanation of evaluation, using stories of leadership experiences prior to the WLS as illustrations.
Experiences during the WLS course	Identification of course attended. Recounting memorable experiences from training, such as activities, assessments and theoretical experiences.
Post-WLS leadership experiences	Self-evaluation of leadership skills after the WLS on a five-point scale. Stories of leadership experiences after the WLS.
Summary questions	Personal assessments of the WLS course impact. Evaluation of the WLS course as a worthwhile investment. Identification of other significant experiences contributing to leadership development.
<b>Information Source: Administrators</b>	
Goals of the G&D program	Explanation of broad goals of G&D. Identification of ideal WLS outcomes with respect to women's leadership development.
Goals of the WLS program	Explanation of goals of the WLS, how WLS goals relate to the goals of G&D and how courses were envisioned to help meet the goals of the CGIAR.
Observations and insights from interacting with WLS alumnae	Identification of re-occurring gender- and culture-based issues that arise for alumnae. Recognition of post-WLS impact.
<b>Information Source: Instructors</b>	
Goals in the Leadership/ Negotiations course	Explanation of overall goals and objectives of course; what concepts participants should master; what skills participants should master; and most important components of the class.
Process for achieving WLS objectives in class	Pinpointing recurring gender-related issues and recurring culture-related issues. Explanation of how issues are handled in class. Explanation of class exercises and activities.
Issues that arise in the class	Personal coaching sessions provided for each participant.
Future of the WLS	Reflections on the effectiveness of the course and future directions envisioned.

lend themselves to nuanced and rich description that retains the holism of the lived experience. Analysis grounded in rich description lends itself to an appreciation of the significance of everyday action.

Information was from G&D administrators and WLS instructors to compliment information obtained from the WLS alumnae and to provide additional context. Administrators provided information that put the WLS course in the context of the goals of the G&D Program and the CGIAR as a whole. The instructors provided information about how they conceived of leadership development and put the training experiences they created in the classroom in the context of the broader goals of their courses. Table 5 summarizes the information needs and descriptions of information sought from alumnae, administrators and instructors by means of an interview protocol.

### **Gaining access to information sources**

The contact information for all administrators and instructors was obtained from the G&D Program Leader and all were contacted directly by the Principal Investigator. A Web-based survey, used to access alumnae, drew 76 responses or approximately one quarter of the total sample of WLS alumnae.

The Web survey elicited several types of information:

- general information such as dates and course(s) attended, nationality, rank, Center, and current employment status with CGIAR;
- willingness to participate in an in-depth interview and contact information for interested parties (although the Web survey was effective for reaching WLS alumnae, its primary function was to identify those alumnae interested in being interviewed); and
- impact of WLS course on respondent's leadership effectiveness.

Although the Web survey was primarily used to identify interviewees, it also offered an opportunity for obtaining limited information about WLS alumnae beyond their demographic characteristics. Thus, questions limited by response choices (e.g. very positive, somewhat positive, neither positive nor negative, somewhat negative, and very negative) were used to obtain information about how respondents generally felt about the impact of the WLS on their leadership development.

### **Data collection procedures**

Of the 76 alumnae who responded, the 50 who agreed to be interviewed were immediately contacted by e-mail and sent consent forms that further informed the alumnae about the research. When this form was signed and returned, interviews commenced. Of the 50 who agreed to be interviewed, 24 followed through. Thus, approximately 8 percent of the total WLS alumnae population were interviewed in-depth for this study. Of the five instructors who were contacted, two – one for the Leadership Course and one for the Negotiation Course – were interviewed. Both individuals were key informants for both courses.<sup>18</sup> The two G&D program administrators agreed to be interviewed. Thus, 28 individuals were interviewed.

The vast majority of interviews were conducted by telephone. Only two interviews – with an administrator and instructor – took place in person. The phone interviews lasted between one hour and three-and-a-half hours. The average telephone interview

<sup>18</sup> The Leadership Course instructor was most involved in conceptualizing the course and had been a key player from the inception of the WLS. There was only one Negotiations course instructor.



was two hours. One alumnae was interviewed twice. The face-to-face interviews lasted between five and six-and-a-half hours.

### Analytic procedures and analytic categories

The analytic procedures of grounded theory methodology were used to reduce the data and identify the core themes of the research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory methodology refers to an approach to developing theoretical ideas from the data. The collection and analysis of leadership stories was a concurrent process with leadership stories extracted and summarized immediately after each interview. In addition, interviews were compared, emerging themes identified and subsequently, thematic categories were identified and elaborated. As new themes were identified, new theoretical memos were written, and subsequent interviews were compared to emergent themes to determine if there were indeed new categories.

All interviews were transcribed and subjected to careful thematic and line-by-line coding. This analytic process resulted in the modification of the analytic categories identified during data collection and the emergence of thematic categories that better fit the data. In this process, the core theme of leader types and types of leadership transformations emerged. These core themes served to bring all leadership stories together into a coherent conceptual framework.<sup>19</sup>

The research found that the WLS put in motion a process of change among participants that resulted in three types of leadership transformation: from hidden to visible leadership, constrained to enabled leadership, and intuitive to strategic leadership. In the context of data analysis, it is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. The WLS alumnae told many different leadership stories and those stories did not all fit in one category. Rather, different stories could be classified in the different categories. The leadership type in which they were ultimately classified characterized the repetitive leadership dilemma or the most salient leadership dilemma at the time of the training. The most important lessons from the WLS, related to these salient leadership problems.

### Anonymity of information sources

Several measures have been taken to maintain the anonymity of information sources. Because of the small number of administrators and instructors among the interviewees, it was not possible to maintain their anonymity. However, after discussing this with them, both administrators and instructors, indicated that the lack of anonymity was not problematic. The steps taken to ensure the anonymity of alumnae, and to some extent administrators, are as follows:

- all names used in describing stories are fictitious;
- names of projects, system-wide initiatives or programs are not identified;
- Centers of alumnae are not named in any of the stories;
- years in which the participants took the Leadership or Negotiation Course are not indicated;
- some pieces of information from the stories have been altered although the meaning of the story has not been changed;

<sup>19</sup> One interviewee felt that the WLS course she took was not helpful to her because: the case studies used in the course were applicable to for-profit organizations not to development organizations, she had already mastered the knowledge and skill explored in the course, and she wanted more interaction with participants. Because the experience of this one individual failed to fit the pattern in the data set as a whole, it could not be meaningfully incorporated into the framework.

- nationality has not been included in a story along with other identifying facts;
- position titles have been omitted or changed;
- years of employment in a Center are not included.

## Angela: An Extended Story of Hidden Leadership

### REPAIRING THE SCARS CREATED BY AN UNEASY ADJUSTMENT

Angela's story is of coping with an organizational culture she experienced as intolerant, even hostile, to cultural diversity. Early in her career, she overcame cultural barriers in the Center and emerged as a respected leader. Her new status brought benefits but required her to suppress valued aspects of her cultural background and personality. Becoming a key player within the organization also had a paradoxical effect of diminishing her capacity to bring about tolerance and valuation of cultural diversity within the Center. The WLS course helped Angela affirm and reintegrate suppressed aspects of her personal style. However, there was some evidence that it did not help her cultivate an organizational environment that values cultural diversity.

#### Making an uneasy adjustment (pre-WLS)

Angela's pre-WLS story has three themes: i) experiencing a clash between her values and those of her Center, ii) conforming to organizational expectations and iii) experiencing contradictory feelings about her adaptation response.

#### Culture Clash

Many stories of cultural adaptation start with the clash between an individual's expectations and those of the organization. These clashes, often painful, confusing and difficult to overcome, are significant experiences that are often vividly recalled. When asked to characterize her leadership effectiveness after the WLS course, Angela responded, "very effective," and, chuckling, added that this very response demonstrated the significant changes she has made in order to survive in her Center.

*When I first started working at my Center, I would underplay what I was good at. I had been raised with this idea that women shouldn't speak too much and that tooting your own horn was not a good thing. In the Asian country, the culture is very much that you should be modest and other people should praise.*

Her modesty, however, was a disadvantage in her Center.

*It used to be that the nastier the question you asked at seminars, the more points you got for being intelligent. They would ask questions in a way that implied, "You idiot. Why on earth would you run your regression that way?" Now, there's a little bit nicer tone in the way questions are being asked.*

Being a woman also contributed to her outsider status. Women's accomplishments were reigned in by attributing success to something other than professionalism and competence. "When I told my boss that the World Bank was interested in funding me to do some work, he said, 'What'd you do, bat your pretty eyes at them?' It was a joke, but I took great offense."

Women were also minimized by being rendered invisible.

*At a donor meeting, a senior official at my Center was asked to introduce his staff to the donors. He went around the room introducing people, but cut things off just before he got to me. I was standing in the back but I was wearing a red suit. He just didn't see me at all. It wasn't purposeful – he was quite embarrassed when it was pointed out that one person had not been introduced.*

A final factor that contributed to her outsider status was her profession. She said: “Sometimes I felt like it was a hostile environment. I was undervalued. In fact, when I first came, the only people who were valued were (discipline) who could do quantitative analysis.”

She concluded that to be taken seriously, one had to be a (discipline), male and/or assertive. She observed similar experiences among colleagues, one of whom was world-renowned. A new division director had come in who did not respect the new renowned colleague even though he was one of the very highly respected experts on (discipline). The outcome was that his contract was not renewed. Angela said there were several others whose careers suffered because of their lack of assertiveness.

### **Survival by conforming to the organization's culture**

Angela recognized that her lack of characteristics and behaviors required for success in her Center was career threatening.

When her “ranting” about how her colleague was treated did not make a difference, she concluded that her only choice was to conform. She was modest, female and a (discipline). Of these, gender was immutable, her profession was only partially negotiable, but the third, modesty, was malleable. This was an area in which she made the greatest modification.

She learned a great deal about what was expected from listening and watching. She learned how to manage interpersonal relationships in a manner that was expected. In seminars, she started to ask questions and learned that asking questions in a nasty tone was not to be taken personally, it was a challenge, part of the normal give and take.

*Now I enjoy it when I get a good question. I feel more confident, so I don't get threatened by it as much. Of course, since I might get annoyed if it's asked really nastily, I'll usually picture the person asking the question as an idiot.*

As for her discipline, she found she had to demonstrate that she could do what the (discipline) did, if she wanted to. So, she demonstrated her competence and skill as a quantitative researcher and learned to tell people the value of her contributions.

*I just couldn't wait for my boss to discover that I was brilliant. I had to periodically tell him that I was a respected authority in my area. One turning point was when I said to him, “If you want a (discipline), there are people better than me. But if you want somebody who can talk about (my area of expertise), I'm one of the ten top in the world.”*

### **Impact of the Leadership Course**

Angela's efforts to conform had a very positive effect on her professional credibility – she was taken seriously, moved up the organizational hierarchy. Yet she expressed

uneasiness. For her, the most significant impact of the WLS course was the realization that she did not have to conform fully, that she could and should retain aspects of herself that she valued.

*The training course gave me understanding that some of my instinctive ways of doing things were right or had value, that I didn't need to absorb every aspect of the organization's culture, that there was value in the way I was. In one sense, the course kept me from losing myself totally to the behaviors and working culture I was observing.*

Ironically, her instinctive way of doing things was recognized and appreciated within her Center as well. Her boss selected her to lead a system-wide project, telling her explicitly that her fairness would make her the most effective person for the task.

*Fairness and some of these other traits where I may be a little different from the other researchers actually worked in my favor and were real assets in this program. So the women's leadership training course helped me to realize that some of these other traits I had might be assets too.*

## Maria: An Extended Story of Constrained Leadership

### MAKING A PROBLEMATIC RESTRUCTURING WORK EFFECTIVELY

Maria, a theme leader responsible in part for the coordination of a system-wide project, describes her leadership effectiveness prior to the WLS as “somewhat effective.” Although she often received verbal support for her ideas of how to do things differently or make things work better, the people she engaged would often leave her with the task of implementing the vision. She didn’t have the understanding or guidance needed “for getting people excited and working together, with everybody pulling their own weight and being part of a big idea.”

### Lessons from the Negotiation Course

One of the most important lessons she learned from the WLS Negotiation Course was that she did not have to do everything herself.

*One of the major things I still remember from that course – which was many years ago – is a better understanding of the fact that not everybody’s like me and if I want people to appreciate the fact that we are doing something together, I have to recognize what I can bring to it, what I can’t bring to it, what other people can bring to it. For a period of time, I felt I needed to do everything myself.*

One of the most important and complex challenges articulated in the above statement was recognizing that, in order to engage others, she would have to take into account their differing concerns and desires. This required skillful negotiation and, for Maria, it required modification of her tendency to engage in “strong-willed” negotiation – insisting that things be done her way.

*There was one particularly memorable moment in the Negotiation Course. We were role-playing about a development project in a port area that would create shopping malls and commercial activity. I was representing the government, other people were representing NGOs and trade unions and various others. One of my colleagues had been instructed not to compromise under any circumstances. In fact, the instructor said, “I’ll give you a bottle of wine if you do not compromise.” And she didn’t. Everybody else was willing to compromise and she just refused. She was brilliant. And because I was the government, I started out with a heavy hand and everybody was telling me to shut up.*

When her team was unsuccessful in this particular negotiation, she learned several lessons that have served her well. One lesson came from the bottle of wine that had been promised to their negotiating partner without the group’s knowledge. “I realized there could be a wildcard that you don’t anticipate, and that’s the bottle of wine.” To negotiate effectively required an understanding of the desires and motivations of the others.

*You think you're absolutely right, but everyone else is going to think they're absolutely right as well. I've got very strong opinions. Before I did this training, my tendency was to argue until people capitulated. But training made me recognize that if I win out of sheer force of will, it's not going to be a happy alliance because other people will feel like they've given in or lost. It's much, much better to come to a common agreement where everybody feels they've won something – maybe not 100 percent of what they wanted, but everybody feels that they've gotten something out of the deal. And that's been quite significant.*

### Problematic restructuring

Indeed, each of these lessons proved significant in how she participated in a sensitive negotiation aimed at making a problematic organizational restructuring work for all involved. Maria had been charged with leading a discipline area that had staff in several regions. Some regional directors committed a full-time staff person, some a part-time staff person and, because they reported to the regional director and not Maria, her efforts to engage them were not always successful.

Then restructuring – moving from a regional to a thematic structure – brought significant upheaval to this less-than-perfect arrangement. Scientific activities previously carried out by the regional offices were brought together into program areas and administered by a program director. Non-program functions that required Center-wide coordination were grouped into research and support units. Maria was named director of one of these units but she did not have authority over the individuals who worked in her discipline area across the regions. The regional staff members were part of her unit in theory but, in practice, they continued to report to the regional directors.

This lack of authority plus a lack of funding had implications for Maria's effectiveness as well as the effectiveness of the other unit heads. She had no way to define or evaluate activities in her area and she lacked resources that could provide an incentive. Without authority or resources, Maria and her colleagues felt their hands were tied.

There were huge expectations, but how were we going to operate? Everyone said to us, "well, senior management has said it'll work out, so it'll work out". And we always said, "How?" They never acknowledged that it was a problem. It was very frustrating and very irritating. Finally, we got people to engage and say, "okay, yeah, we're going to take this seriously, we've got to take this seriously."

### Framing the problem effectively

One of the things that she and the unit leaders did was to frame their task within the context of the Center's strategic goals that had been identified by a stakeholder survey. One of those objectives directly related to her discipline area.

Framing the argument in the context of the Center's strategy was an extremely powerful negotiation move, putting her, as well as her colleagues responsible for the support units, in a strong negotiating position. More importantly, it gave them a means of communicating with each of the key stakeholders within the organization to figure out how to make the new structure work.

Armed with this framing, she first approached staff within the programmatic areas that worked on functions related to her unit. She and her colleagues then approached

the program directors, regional directors and, finally, the director general to discuss common ground and how each could contribute to the task of focusing on the importance of an integrated Center-wide initiative with joint planning and staff accountability. The inclusion of key stakeholders proved very effective in getting buy-in for their ideas from each group.

*I've never had the funds to bring together all the people in the regions who have responsibility for my discipline area. Trying to forge a team without ever having them together in one place is impossible. Bringing them together would mean that I would work with people in the regions (who report to other people) and we, collectively, would come up with a work plan, and they would commit a certain percentage of their time to this collective work plan, and they would then be accountable for that time within the terms of their performance agreement. Then I would be involved in assessing their performance based on the time that they have given to this.*

*And that's big. Then for management to say, "Okay, we're going to go to our donors and say that our stakeholders have said this is vitally important and so this is significant" – that's a huge step. And it happened through individual conversations and interactions between the support units, all of which had similar issues in terms of how we get the regional people engaged with us.*

### **Making and recovering from a blunder**

While she had made a great deal of progress getting the buy-in and commitment of key stakeholders in this restructuring, there was one critical meeting – involving the DG, four program directors and the heads of the support units – in which she made a blunder that threatened to undo all the good work she and her colleagues had done to create common ground.

*I had a really bad moment. We (the heads of the support units) went in on the offensive and said, "Half of the six objectives that have been identified in the strategy represent our work. We've got no resources and no staff and we're expected to cover 50 percent. So, the question is not how we serve you but how you serve us?" And they hated that. It was too aggressive. I was speaking on behalf of the three research and support units and they felt I was being too aggressive.*

When she left the meeting, she and her colleagues revised their strategy.

*We said, okay, we'll just put the same argument in a less aggressive form. As opposed to saying, it's your responsibility to help us, we said, you know, it's in both our interests, this is how we can help each other and this is a mechanism, it's non-threatening and let's do this together. They obviously know that three of the six objectives address our areas so let's put it in a way that's going to be palatable to them and is not going to feel threatening in terms of their responsibility and authority.*

The next day they met with the program directors again with their new approach.

*It was one day later and it was extraordinary. We basically said, "Let's work out our common problems and come to some way of working together." And it worked out fine. In fact, it was funny, because after*



*that session, on the last day, people were saying things like this is fabulous, go for it, everything is great, everything you said is wonderful, we definitely are supportive. I was thrilled and also stunned. We kind of got a standing ovation.*

One of the things that was particularly interesting is how her insights from the Negotiation Course informed her practice in this situation.

*I don't think I consciously thought, "Oh, I need to remember what I learned in the training." I definitely went out of that first meeting and thought, "Oh, that was stupid. What I really need to be thinking about is making everybody comfortable. That their needs are going to be met and we're all going to be pulling towards the greater good and it's not just about what Maria wants and what the other research and support units want, but they also see that it's going to benefit them." I certainly think I internalized lessons from the course that led me to that way of thinking.*

What was not stated, but was apparent in her story, was that she internalized much more than the crucial lesson concerning her own strong willed negotiating style. She also learned to be clear about her desire and to take others' desires into consideration. Although one of the program directors had asked her why she was so surprised that the group had fully backed her and the other support units heads after the difficult conversation, it is clear from this story that given the initial resistance and the year-long effort that was involved, getting everyone on board and to the point of agreement was not a *fait accompli* – it was accomplished through skillful negotiation.

## Marcelina: An Extended Story of Intuitive Leadership

### FINDING WHAT MAKES “THEM” TICK

It has only been a few years since Marcelina, a researcher, moved to a new country to manage a research laboratory. Prior to taking on her new post, she had been in a similar role in her home country. But despite the surface similarities, there was one important difference. While she had known how to motivate people in her home country, she was at a loss for how to do this in her new milieu.

The course helped her define herself in terms of her leadership styles which, when applied to her staff, enabled her to understand her successes (with two staff members), losses (with two staff members) and to reach out to a staff member whose potential she recognized. This leadership story is a good example of how a WLS alumnus deliberately used knowledge acquired in the course to fine-tune her leadership behavior in the area of developing others.<sup>20</sup>

*I had worked in exactly the same position at an organization in my home country where I would have considered myself a very effective leader. I had a team, a little smaller but with the same sorts of goals, but everyone was basically from the same country and had the same focus. Culturally I understood what made them tick and how to get the best out of them. Here, I struggle with some people, with the culture. I find myself getting very frustrated by the lack of commitment to a deadline, the lack of willingness to take ownership of a project, and I get frustrated by my inability (with two people in particular), to make them excited about their work. And so, I struggle.*

Although frustrated, she also had some clear successes. The course was crucial in helping her understand her leadership style and diagnosing why she had been effective with two people while she had not been very effective with two others. It also helped her appreciate the importance of self-regulation and how her impatience was getting in her way of using a more effective leadership style. More specifically, she realized that, while she had employed an “affiliative” style with the former two team members, she had used her more preferred “pace-setting” style with the latter. Despite the recognition that her two successes were linked to her use of an affiliative style, she decided that investing in the two problematic individuals was not a priority. Instead, she resolved to invest time and effort in another staff member whom she recognized as smart and motivated and deserving of more “affiliative” attention. While the affiliative style was time consuming, it produced the kinds of results she wanted for the team.

### Two Coaching Successes

Marcelina had had success in motivating two of her staff. One was a woman who had been with the Center for a long time but had been “shunted from lab to lab.”

<sup>20</sup> Readers who are interested in obtaining more information on the theoretical ideas described in this story can consult: Primal Leadership by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Anne McKee.

Marcelina recognized that this woman was bright and spent time in helping her develop.

*I sat down with her for a couple of hours, gave her the list of the research projects that I wanted to have in the lab, asked her what portion of her time she would like to put into either service or research or a split, and which projects she'd like to have. She decided she would be fully research but, when we began, she decided she would be a little bit of service, as well.*

This arrangement worked very well. This staff person was very resourceful and excited about the project. Marcelina taught her how to use some new equipment and the staff person soon fully assumed the responsibility of managing it. Marcelina said this woman went further and “wrote up (the research she had been doing) into a poster presentation, and I got her into an international conference.”

Marcelina also had success in working with another staff member who came to the Center with a year of research experience.

*She's one of the brightest people I've ever worked with. I explained the project to her and she took it and she has been generating so many nice results. But she wants to move up in her career. I knew I was going to lose her, so I searched far and wide and found her a really good Ph.D. program. So she won't only get the PhD, she'll get it from a good institute.*

Marcelina was aware her two successes had to do with the fact that she made an effort to find out what they were interested in and supported their developmental goals through resources and encouragement. With the first woman, there was also an interpersonal connection that facilitated the coaching and mentoring that resulted in the subordinate's professional growth. With the second woman, the coaching and mentoring was initiated differently. Marcelina was very impressed with her intelligence and skills and decided to coach and mentor her after she learned from another source that this staff member wanted to pursue a Ph.D. program and would leave if she were accepted into one.

## Two coaching failures

The two staff members Marcelina was not able to engage were a man who was a full-time permanent member of her staff, and a woman employed in another unit who had come on board for a specific project.

*He is a research technician, does a lot of research, but he works in the service program. I couldn't reach him at all, and I still don't know how to, not even after the course. He pretends his English is terrible, but it's actually not bad. He's just not interested and does not make a good contribution to the lab.*

She tried, unsuccessfully, to engage him – moved him out of the service area, asked him what he really wanted to do. Thinking that it might be fieldwork, she designed some field experiments but he was not interested. She put him back in the lab because that is where he said he wanted to be, but he did not show any real interest there either. Finally, out of desperation, she gave him a low score on his annual evaluation hoping

that this would alert him to his developmental needs and propel him into action. However, that alienated him even further.

*He avoids me like the plague, and I can't get beyond the "Yes ma'am, yes ma'am." And that is definitely a cultural thing. Everyone else I've managed to convince to call me by my first name. I try when I sit down to talk with him to get a dialogue going about what he wants to do, but everything I suggest is "yes, ma'am." And that is the biggest obstacle I haven't found a way to communicate with him yet. I thought I could manage all people. ... He's my first failure.*

The second problematic coaching story is a woman who arrived already having a fairly senior position. She came highly recommended from a quality lab and was interested in the work she was doing. The problem, however, was that she could not work independently and appeared to be less qualified than expected.

*She's on a really nice project that I think is quite a simple one, but she just doesn't get it, doesn't get excited about it, doesn't use initiative at all. I haven't been able to push the button to get the fire in her belly on a project.*

Because the situations surrounding these two individuals were different, Marcelina felt that her strategy with them also had to be different.

### The staff with potential

While Marcelina had her successes and failures in developing staff, there was a man who fell in a more ambiguous category. She described him as "a very smart fellow" with aspirations to make things better for himself – wanting to pursue a Ph.D. He was a hard worker and had managed to get to the Center on his own merits. But he faced significant obstacles. He supported a family on his meager salary making it difficult to push forward with his professional development goals. Although she saw his potential, Marcelina said: "I didn't get behind him before I took the course because I knew it would take a lot of work." One insight from the course was that, to build up the capacity of the Center, she needed to invest in coaching this man.

### The impact of the WLS Leadership Course

The WLS course introduced Marcelina to concepts and definitions of leadership styles and emotional intelligence. These concepts and definitions were very helpful to her because, by giving names to leadership styles, she became aware of her tacit practices, was introduced to alternative practices she had not considered, and could see the ones that needed improving. Learning the various types of leadership helped her define her preferred leadership style – pace-setting – and recognize the conditions under which another style might be more effective.

*So, pace-setting is my default, but now I know that I should try harder with other styles, such as "coaching" and "affiliated" styles, and the "authoritative" one, the "visionary" one. I think I'm not too bad at it – but I've got to be conscious of applying it, and recognize that I've got to "coach" a bit more.*

Similarly, defining her emotional intelligence as "self regulation" facilitated a diagnosis of how she managed her emotions and how she could do a better job in stressful

situations. In general, even though she previously did not have definitions for all of these styles, she still had an intuitive understanding of the processes.<sup>21</sup>

*I think I practiced all of the things in some sort of jumbled way. But by defining all the components, I recognize which components need building on. I now know that my self-regulation needs a bit of building up or that I need to do a bit of coaching here, or I need to do a bit of the authoritative, the visionary, the affiliative, the democratic, the pace-setting, and this one, the autocratic.*

She found these insights to be particularly helpful in understanding her successes and failures in motivating her staff. Although her preferred mode was pace-setting, she had used the affiliative style with both individuals she had been able to motivate. She recognized that she can be affiliative initially, to help launch someone, but then wants to switch to a pace-setting style and watch them “run with it.” When the mentee’s response fits with her preferences, as it did with the two individuals with whom she had been successful, then she is effective. However, as she found in the cases where she had been unsuccessful in coaching subordinates, neither individual complemented her style. She now knows that, when faced with this type of situation, she becomes impatient and the relationship does not produce expected outcomes.

### Recommitting self to developing an underutilized resource

These insights helped her make important decisions and changes in her leadership behaviors after the course. For example, her new insights made a difference with the staff member in whom she had not previously invested time. She said that after the course, she decided to coach and develop this man. He had a lot of potential and she recognized that her leadership style would work with him.

*I knew that he was just coasting, but a really bright fellow. I knew that I didn’t need to lead him very much scientifically; he’s really good. I hadn’t put as much into getting to know him. So I’ve started doing that now.*

In light of this, she decided to use a more affiliative style with this person. “I’m trying to give him a stipend and get him enrolled in a university in (country of origin). Things like that. I’m trying to be far more affiliative and do far more coaching and a little less pace-setting. And a bit more visionary too.” She had some discussions with him to find out what his career and life goals were, and she began to help him move forward with these goals. Specifically, she helped him with the university application process. She said this effort made a difference in his morale. “I’m sensing a much more positive energy from him and more of a commitment to his job. It’s not that he was slacking off or anything, but now he’s giving more. I feel that he’s much happier to be here.”

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21 An excellent introduction and discussion of emotional intelligence can be found in: *Working With Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman.

## About the Author

Gelaye Debebe is Assistant Professor of Organizational Sciences at The George Washington University, Faculty Affiliate at the Center for Gender in Organizations at the Simmons Graduate School of Management, and a founding member of the Women's Leadership Institute at The George Washington University. Dr. Debebe holds a BS in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, an MS in Human Resource Development from The American University, and a PhD in Organizational Behavior from the University of Michigan Business School. She has taught Leadership, Organizational Behavior, and Managing Cultural Diversity. Her primary research is in the area of cross-cultural communicative competence. Her published work has appeared in the *Research in Organizational Behavior and Development in Practice*. She is also author of a forthcoming book entitled *Cross-Cultural Competence and Coordination: The Role of Organizational Learning in Economic Development*, to be published by Lexington Press.



## CGIAR

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) supports 15 international agricultural research Centers located around the globe in their efforts to mobilize agricultural science to reduce poverty, foster human well-being, promote agricultural growth and protect the environment. The CGIAR is a strategic alliance of countries, international and regional organizations, and private foundations working with national agricultural research systems, civil society organizations and the private sector to build the scientific foundations of equitable and sustainable development. The results of the work generated by the CGIAR are global public goods and freely available to all. CGIAR members contributed approximately US\$450 million in 2005, the single-largest public goods investment in mobilizing science for the benefit of poor farming communities worldwide. For more information about the CGIAR, see: [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org)

## GENDER AND DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Working with diversity is more than a social skill in the CGIAR – it is an organizational imperative. With scientists and professionals coming from more than 100 countries, the Gender and Diversity Program (G&D) works to leverage that staff diversity for global impact. The G&D Program always keeps its focus on the overriding mission of the CGIAR – fighting hunger and poverty through scientific advancements in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, policy and environment. Quite simply, the CGIAR cannot succeed in its mission without leveraging the richness that staff diversity brings in terms of new ideas, new ways of doing things and new abilities to find solutions. People join the CGIAR to make a difference and G&D is there to support them.

G&D's strategy affirms diversity as a critical performance factor. It is premised on three key objectives that guide G&D's work.

- Strengthen the ability of CGIAR Centers to attract, develop and retain world class staff from diverse backgrounds and regions, with particular emphasis on women in management and science.
- Consolidate and institutionalize policies and practices to incorporate fully the values of inclusion, dignity, wellbeing and opportunity into the management systems of the CGIAR Centers.
- Integrate gender and diversity practices into the core work of the CGIAR through closer collaboration with research teams and management as well as the CGIAR's System Office and other global initiatives.

G&D is the CGIAR's system wide program tasked with delivering gender and diversity results within the 15 Centers. Just as the CGIAR shares its scientific results freely, G&D makes its products and services widely available to all via its Web site. By putting focus on performance and accountability, G&D ensures that gender and diversity issues receive more than lip service and are, indeed, fully integrated into activities, policies and programs and produce tangible results. G&D's services include diversity-positive recruitment, international teamwork, cross-cultural communications and advancement for women. G&D helps position the CGIAR Centers as employers of first choice.

As a unit of the CGIAR System Office, G&D maintains continuous consultation and communication with all key bodies of the CGIAR. It is hosted by the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) in Nairobi, Kenya. G&D's Program Leader is Vicki Wilde ([v.wilde@cgiar.org](mailto:v.wilde@cgiar.org)) whose office is housed at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, Italy.

### CGIAR CENTERS

Africa Rice Centre (WARDA), BENIN  
 Bioversity International, ITALY  
 Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), INDONESIA  
 Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), COLOMBIA  
 Centro Internacional de Mejoramiento de Maiz y Trigo (CIMMYT), MEXICO  
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 International Water Management Institute (IWMI), SRI LANKA  
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 WorldFish Center, MALAYSIA

*We cannot achieve on the outside what we do not practice on the inside*